DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 342 077 EA 023 659

AUTHOR Firestone, William A.; And Others
TITLE Education Reform from 1983 to 1990: State Action and District Response.
INSTITUTION Consortium for Policy Research in Education, New Brunswick, NJ.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO CPRE-RR-021
PUB DATE Dec 91
CONTRACT RI17G10007
NOTE 84p.
AVAILABLE FROM Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1568 ($12.00).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Finance; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Excellence in Education; Governance; Public Schools; School Districts; *School Effectiveness; *School Restructuring

ABSTRACT

The 1980s were an exceptional period for state educational reform activity. The decade was notable for the breadth and persistence of the movement for educational reform centered at the state and local levels. To learn more about state reform activity, the consortium launched a study to examine policy making and practice in six states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania) from 1986 through 1990. The states varied in the scope of their reform efforts, the instruments used to get districts to change, and geographical location. Within these states, reform activity was documented in 21 districts through site visits, periodic phone calls, and a review of the documents. This report summarizes the initiatives. The introduction reviews the "waves" of reforms in the 1980s, trends, and problem areas. Trends in state reform policies constitute the next chapter, which includes a discussion on curriculum and academic standards, testing and accountability, teacher policies, and changes in educational governance. The next chapter offers an overview of the trends in local school districts, including local developments in curriculum, testing, teacher quality, current district priorities and concerns, and variations in local response to state reform. The fourth chapter examines school finance in the 1980s, and the concluding chapter presents challenges for future reform. (72 references) (RR)

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CONSORTIUM FOR POLICY RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Education Reform from 1983 to 1990:

State Action and District Response

William A. Firestone
Sheila Rosenblum
Beth D. Bader
Diane Massell

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December 1991

CPRE Research Report Series RR-021

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Executive Summary

The 1980s were an exceptional period for state educational reform activity. During the decade a distinct brand of "educational excellence" reforms swept through the states with the speed of a successful grass-roots social movement. Legislatures passed bills, increased state aid, and examined the findings of hundreds of task forces and commissions. Governors vied to be the first with new programs. State and national activity inspired districts to attempt innovations as well.

The decade was notable for the breadth and the persistence of the movement for educational reform centered at the state and local levels. However, state and district activity were not quickly reflected in classroom practice and student learning. Moreover, recent test scores provide only limited and selective evidence of any increase in student learning. At a time when there is some disappointment with recent reforms and discussion of changes as diverse as national standards, choice, and restructuring, it is important to reflect on recent developments and their implication for the future.

To learn more about state reform activity [and its impact on school districts], the Center (now Consortium) for Policy Research in Education launched a study to examine policymaking and practice in six states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania) from 1986 through 1990. The states varied in the scope of their reform efforts, the instruments used to get districts to change, and geographical location. Within these states, reform activity was documented in 21 districts through site visits, periodic telephone calls, and a review of documents. A number of reports were issued previously to discuss preliminary findings (Fuhrman, Clune & Elmore, 1988; Firestone, Fuhrman & Kirst, 1989). In this report we summarize the initiatives of the six states and the responses of the 21 local districts. Drawing on these findings and on the current reform literature, we discuss implications of our findings for further education reform efforts.

The question for the 1990s is whether the momentum for reform can be maintained. The current economic downturn is likely to limit reforms in the short run to those that can be attempted with existing resources. In the long run, however, educational expenditures are likely to continue to rise just as they have done in every decade since World War II. The more difficult problem is that as state experience deepens, the complexities of improving education become more apparent. The easier changes, like increasing high school graduation requirements and student and teacher testing, have been accomplished. However, the need to upgrade the quality of education is still widely recognized (Murphy, 1990). Steps are being taken, but actions that are more difficult to accomplish will be required. By 1990, many states and local districts had begun to address the more thorny problems but efforts were fragmentary and uncoordinated. We call attention to these five issues as among the pressing priorities.

Our research points to a need for more coordination of efforts to improve education in this country. The crucial issues that need to be addressed include higher-order thinking, at-risk youth, governance, local variation, and coherence. We briefly discuss these issues below.

Higher-Order Thinking

In the early 1980s, states found their students functioning at low levels of literacy, scores were down on many measures of student achievement, and businesses were finding decreasing numbers of students able to handle even the simplest skill levels. Although national reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) dramatized the need to raise the intellectual level of what was being taught in American schools, many popular early initiatives focused mainly on assuring that students met a basic skill level. Early legislation, in particular, focused on minimum requirements and basic skills (Firestone, Fuhrman & Kirst, 1989) to meet this educational emergency.

Nevertheless, increasing demands for workers who can meet more sophisticated job requirements, and who are flexible enough to retrain when certain industries become obsolete, have motivated some states and districts to initiate policies to encourage students to develop higher-order cognitive skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking. As basic skills reforms become institutionalized, the interest of reformers turns even more strongly to higher-order thinking to meet the need for a more sophisticated work force.

This growing interest in higher-order thinking is clearly a positive development. However, many educators believe it is just a beginning; that the core technology of schools must be restructured to center more on engaging the learner than on developing a product (e.g. Elmore & Associates, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Murphy, 1991). Old ways of structuring classrooms with tracks and differentiated curricula are failing to develop students' capacities as workers, learners and critical thinkers. People working in the field are developing models of learner-centered education that seeks to involve student as co-directors of their own learning. We also need to develop new curricula and forms of assessment that are both better integrated and more focused on higher-order thinking.

At-Risk Youth

The problem of serving students at risk of failure is growing. It is *the* issue for urban districts and one of growing significance for many others as well. Sensitivity to the needs of at-risk youth with learning and social problems contributed to a significant reassessment of some state testing policies when it appeared that some graduation tests were pushing students out of school. Legislatures, departments of education, and local districts began offering extensive support systems for students who were having problems meeting higher classroom, testing, and graduation requirements. Criteria used to identify students currently at-risk of dropping out were extended to include students at risk of

failure, and pre-school and lower grade students whose social, emotional, and economic environment put them at high risk for future educational problems.

A number of states expanded their programs for at-risk teenagers, offering special programs for teen parents, truants, and substance abusers, and developing remediation strategies for low-achieving students. Some states and districts expanded early childhood programs to include special attention for at-risk preschoolers.

The emphasis on higher-order thinking and the problems of educating at-risk youth overlap. The growing need for a flexible work force that can respond to changes in an increasingly technological society requires that the capacity for critical thinking be fostered in *all* students. Developing students as learners and workers through learner-centered pedagogies in the public schools would serve this role, but may require greater coordination with other human service agencies in the case of at-risk youth, and could require additional funds.

Governance

The 1980s were marked by two simultaneous trends. States and districts centralized control over core educational functions through strengthening student testing programs, increasing graduation requirements, and developing curriculum guidelines and frameworks. Simultaneously, many states and districts made conscious efforts to push authority over some issues as far down the hierarchy as possible. Some reformers urged states to bypass the educational hierarchy altogether and give more access to individuals, parents, community groups, businesses, and others. This decentralization trend was a response to increasing perceptions that many district and school needs were unmet because of monolithic state reforms and unresponsive departments of education and central offices. States and districts worked through various efforts at restructuring, such as downsizing and changing the mission of state departments, emphasizing site-based management and community involvement, and including more teachers' voices in decision-making.

Some states attempted to reconcile these apparently contradictory trends through conscious efforts to hold districts accountable for the outcomes of education in return for more control over the process. We need to know more about how these centralizing and decentralizing trends interact, and what the consequences are.

Local Variation

Some members of the education establishment predicted local resistance to the reforms of the 1980s based on their experiences with earlier attempts to change local practice. However, most districts complied at least passively and many exhibited active and even enthusiastic acceptance of certain new state requirements. Local variation in response to state initiatives stems in large part from the fact that local district agendas are

often quite different from those of state and national reformers. Districts differ in both the extent of their adoption of the state agenda and the presence of an independent, local reform agenda, depending on how well state reforms fit with local concerns.

As in past efforts to improve education, the present challenge is to encourage and take advantage of local initiative while ensuring that state requirements for standards are met. At the same time it is necessary to develop policies that take into account the great differences among districts, especially in the educational needs of their students. The problems of big cities with large percentages of low-achieving students, in particular, would benefit greatly from policies that consider their special needs.

Coherence

One reason for local variation is that states often do not send districts consistent messages about what reforms are most important. When states initiate several new policies at the same time, those policies can complement or contradict each other. Sometimes states simultaneously enact reforms that are markedly dissimilar in philosophy. A good example is the tension between the conceptual underpinnings of the "excellence" movement, which are fundamentally bureaucratic and centralizing, and those of the "restructuring" movement, which are essentially professional and decentralizing. Usually, the result is ambiguity and uncertainty. Some states have started coordinating testing and curriculum policy, but it is premature to tell what the outcomes of these efforts will be.

Even so, linkages between testing and curriculum are more developed than linkages between those areas and teaching policy. In most states, professional development has not yet been integrated with testing and curriculum. There is also the problem of ancillary policies, focused on specific issues like drug use and AIDS, which are not being connected to a more systemic view of how educational practice could be improved. Moreover, the comprehensiveness of reform has not generally produced coherence. Most states that passed omnibus reform packages did not coordinate the parts of those bills. This lack of coordination resulted in overload for some districts. Further, the burden for building a coherent vision of reform was left to those at the district level.

Coherent reform packages may have a greater impact on local school districts than a series of uncoordinated policy changes. However, they may require more consensus than typically happens when educational policy is made. Policymakers should consider doing less but concentrating on a smaller set of issues in a way that integrates their efforts around a more challenging mission. This strategy makes even more sense in times of economic downturn when overlapping and/or incoherent policies waste time and funds.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Beverly Hetrick who provided valuable help in developing this report by conducting interviews, collecting data, and sharing her own work and analysis of districts in Georgia and Pennsylvania. We appreciate the support and useful feedback provided by Susan Fuhrman, Michael Kirst, and Allan Odden. We also want to thank the following people who reviewed earlier drafts of this report: Louann Bierlein, Senator John Brandl, Robert Feir, Larry Gess, and Joseph Murphy. The information and views expressed in this report are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the persons named above.

William A. Firestone teaches in the Rutgers Graduate School of Education and is a senior research fellow with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. He is co-author (with Susan Fuhrman and Michael Kirst) of *The Progress of Reform: An Appraisal of State Educational Initiatives* (also published by CPRE and "Continuity and Incrementalism After All: State Reforms in the 1980s." With Beth Bader he has completed *Redesigning Teaching: Professionalism or Bureaucracy?* which will be published by SUNY Press in 1992, and he has written numerous articles on school organization and teacher motivation. Firestone has written several other books including *Rethinking Effective Schools: Research and Practice*, *Change and Effectiveness in Schools: A Cultural Perspective*, and *Great Expectations for Small Schools: The Limitations of Federal Projects*.

Sheila Rosenblum is an independent research consultant in Philadelphia, PA. Over the past twenty years, she has participated or directed numerous evaluation, research and policy studies in education. These studies have included investigations of school improvement and school reform, federal state and local relations in education, and studies of programs for at-risk youth. She has authored or co-authored many reports, articles and book chapters. Ms. Rosenblum holds an M.A. in sociology from Boston University.

Beth D. Bader has been a research associate with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education for more than three years, working out of the Rutgers office. She has worked with William Firestone on a study of teacher policy as well as on the Consortium's state policy and local impacts study. Other interests include the politics and political economy of education.

Diane Massell is a consultant for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education and a doctoral candidate in the Administration and Policy Program at the Stanford School of Education. Her research interests include comparative education policy studies, the entry and organization of women in schooling, and U.S. state elementary and secondary policy. She is currently working on a comparative study of coeducation and single-sex schooling.

Chapter 1
Introduction

The 1980s were an exceptional period for state activity aimed at improving public education. During the decade a distinct brand of "educational excellence" reforms swept through the states. State legislators passed numerous education-related bills, increased state aid, and examined the findings of hundreds of task forces and commissions. Governors vied to be the first with new programs. Reforms spread rapidly from state to state. The rhetoric of educational reform was widespread and pervasive (Fuhrman, Clune & Elmore, 1988).

Reform appears to have had two stages. The first stage, often called Wave 1, was inspired by and embodied in the substance and rhetoric of *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983). The report called for fixing the current model by tightening up curriculum standards for students and teachers, administering more tests, lengthening the school day and year, holding districts more accountable, and drawing more authority to the state. The second stage, labeled Wave 2, was inspired by the rhetoric and substance of *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum, 1986), which spoke of changing the structure of, or restructuring, classrooms and schools, and the nature of teachers' work (Firestone, Fuhrman, & Kirst, 1989). Additional calls for reforms in the spirit of Wave 2 involved changes in governance and authority arrangements. This restructuring movement included teachers and parents more actively in the development and implementation of school reform.

Murphy (1990) speaks of a third stage, Wave 3, emphasizing a total redesign of education, placing the focus of attention on the student, with dramatic changes in the philosophy of school-day organization and the instructional delivery system. This trend was not apparent during our visits to school districts and through our contacts with study states. But many researchers are examining the possibilities, and organizations like the Coalition for Essential Schools are attempting to implement such a redesign.

By the end of the 1980s, the rate of reform was slowing. An economic downturn, resistance to increased taxation, and perceptions that substantial educational improvement was difficult to achieve, seemed to dampen enthusiasm. But some important reform initiatives were still emerging—such as New Jersey's Quality Education Act, a finance equalization measure; Texas' school finance measures; and the Kentucky school system's total reorganization, mandated by the state's Supreme Court.

Researchers differed about the relative success of the 1980s reforms. Some agreed with Joseph Murphy (1989) that the movement had realized some "surprising successes." They believed that the unexpected high level of local district compliance showed promise for future success. Kirst (1991) saw the dramatic upswings in college attendance,

Advanced Placement test taking, and passing rates on some AP tests, as important indicators of improvement. Others were more skeptical, agreeing with Boyd's (1987) assessment that the reforms were more of the same, and showed little cognizance of lessons learned from previous experience. A third view, represented by Firestone (1990) was mildly cautious, seeing advancement but not dramatic improvement.

To shed light on the 1980s reforms, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) in 1986 began a five-year study of the implementation and effects of state educational reform. The study focused on six states: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania.

Figure 1: States Studied by CPRE

These states were chosen to meet three criteria. The first was the scope of change—that is, some states conducted comprehensive reforms that packaged several major initiatives into omnibus legislation while others pursued more incremental changes. The second criterion involved the range of policy instruments used to implement the reforms: whether states relied heavily on mandates that required changes in local behavior, offered incentives for change, or used other strategies like building local capacity to modify district behavior (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Finally, states were chosen to represent geographic variation as indicated by Figure 1.

State-level officials[1] were visited in 1986, and data were collected from school districts[2] in 1987. Progress at the state and district level was monitored through additional trips and telephone calls. Return visits were made to 21 districts during the 1989-90 school year to discern the districts' current priorities and their responses to both local and state reform agendas. These 1989-90 visits provided the major data for this report although information from previous visits, from trips to state capitols, and from other states is also included.

This report describes and explains some of the patterns of educational reform in the 1980s. The remainder of this chapter sets the stage by providing a brief overview of educational progress during the decade. Our findings suggest that the extensive public attention given to education led to modest change in practice and little overall improvement in student achievement as measured by nationally normed tests. The chapter then discusses some of the reasons for the slow rate of educational progress and outlines five major issues that education reformers faced: the tension between focusing on basic skills and encouraging higher-order thinking, problems of at-risk students, changes in governance, state response to district variation, and the need to bring more coherence to disparate educational changes.

The second chapter discusses trends in education reform in the six states studied by CPRE. It attends to all five issues, but focuses on the difficulty in creating coherent state policy. The third chapter examines how district responses to state policies reflected local concerns. The fourth chapter examines the financial context for this complex set of circumstances. The final chapter summarizes findings about these five issues and raises questions for the future direction of educational reform.

Trends in the 1980s

Educational reform in the 1980s was characterized by three trends. First, *there was a massive and sustained increase of public interest in education.* Beginning with the landmark publication of *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) and a host of commission reports in 1983, there were strong and continuing calls for improved education. The urgent calls for reform continued through the early 1990s as illustrated by the development of the National Education Goals and proposals such as President George Bush's *America 2000.* The heightened interest in education was not limited to the state and local educational stakeholders, but included the legislative and executive branches of state government, business and industry, and the university community. Legislatures and governors became

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[1]Officials and staffers from the states' departments of education, boards of education, legislatures, key interest groups, governors' offices, universities, and other state-level respondents were interviewed by CPRE researchers. Key documents were also collected from various sources.

[2]District and school-level personnel, parents and community group members, and local interest group members were interviewed by CPRE researchers. Key documents were also collected.

major policy actors. New university admissions requirements often led states and districts to change standards and curriculum so students could meet the new criteria. Universities were also the sites of heavy research activity tracking the process and impact of state and local reform, and university and research center personnel were often asked to consult with state policy actors. Business groups developed cooperative organizations that lobbied heavily and often successfully for a voice in the reform process. Thus a significant feature of the decade of reform has been an increase in the complexity of the policy environment of education.

Second, *at the state and district level, reform was uneven, exhibiting varied patterns of implementation and effects*. Some efforts, like the increases in course requirements, teacher certification standards, and competency testing, were broadly implemented. Many were easily absorbed into district practices and integrated into district routines. Districts adopted them in part because of their potential to enhance symbolic and real control over work practices and to bolster public confidence. Another whole class of reforms, including notable efforts by some school districts to restructure, led to deeper changes but were more isolated, although sprouting in new locations in increasing numbers (Firestone, Fuhrman, & Kirst, 1989; David, 1989).

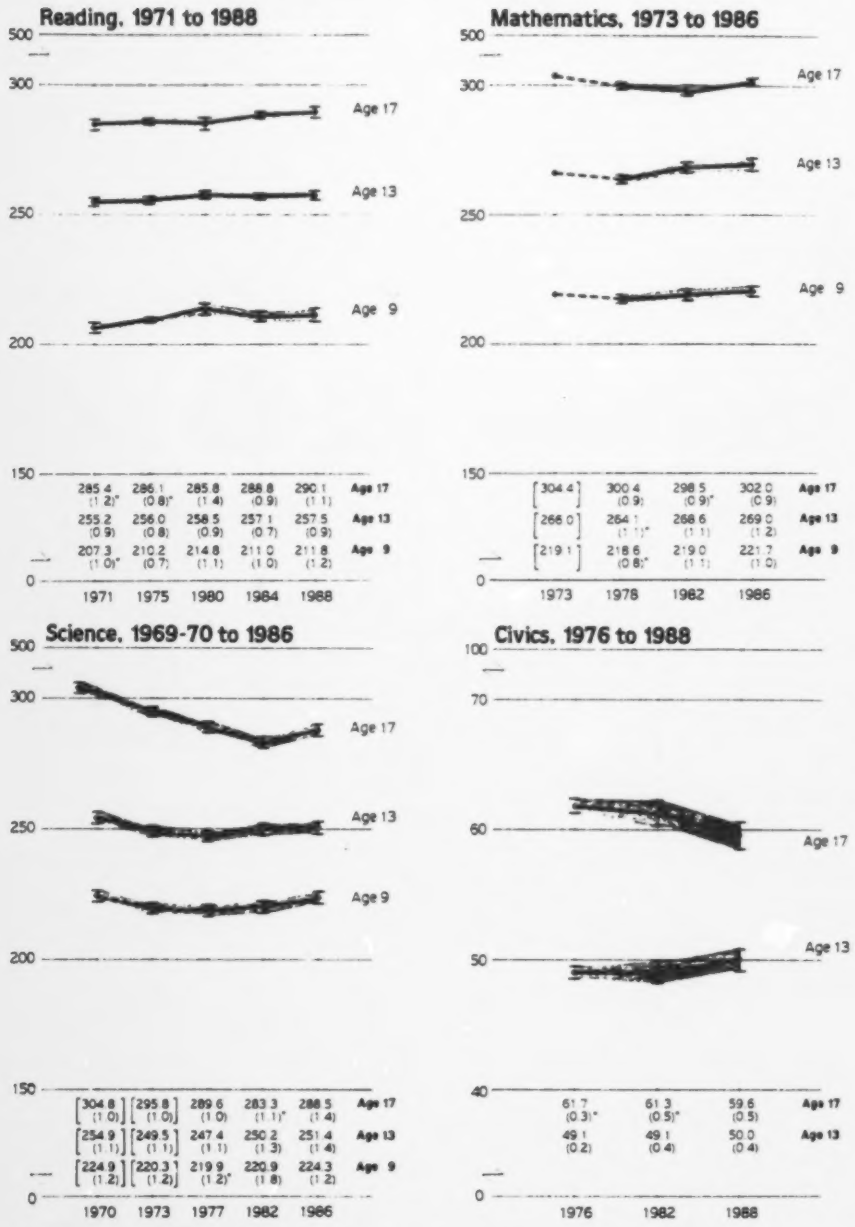
At the classroom level, however, evidence suggests weak links between reform policy and practice (McCarthey & Peterson, 1991b; McCarthey & Peterson, 1991a). The reform goals of changing teacher practices, improving student performance and providing greater exposure to academic content have only been partially realized. Thus, a third trend (or non-trend) has been that *student achievement, as measured by present assessment instruments, has not improved significantly*. Over the decade, SAT verbal scores first improved and then returned to their 1981 levels while math scores leveled off at mid-decade after small, but real gains (Educational Testing Service, 1990). Scores fell again in 1991 with those on the verbal test hitting a low that had not been seen for 15 years (Rothman, 1991).

National Assessment of Educational Progress data provides very little evidence that achievement levels at the end of the 1980s were much higher than they had been at the beginning of the 1970s (Mullis, Owen, & Phillips, 1990). In a very few areas, scores continued to decline. In many areas, there were increases from a low point reached in the late 1970s or early 1980s. However, current levels still did not match those of the early 1970s (see Figure 2). Moreover, students were often learning facts and discrete skills without developing a capacity for problem-solving or complex reasoning (Mullis et al., 1990).

There was some good news. In some areas, minority achievement was increasing faster than achievement for the nation as a whole (Smith & O'Day, 1991a). Also, minority and at-risk students benefitted from programs designed to increase their achievement and cope with their social needs. In addition, more schools offered Advanced Placement courses, more students took Advanced Placement tests, and in some subject

Figure 2

National Trends in Average Proficiency in Various Subject Areas: Ages 9, 13, and 17



Standard errors are presented in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent confidence that the average proficiency of the population of interest is within ± 2 standard errors of the estimated value.

[- - -] Extrapolations based on previous NAEP analyses.

*Statistically significant difference from the most recent assessment at the .05 level.

95% confidence interval

Source: Mullis, I. V. S., E. H. Owen, and G. W. Philips. (1990). *America's Challenge: Accelerating Academic Achievement, A Summary of Findings from 20 Years of NAEP.* Princeton, NJ: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service.

areas higher percentages of students passed the tests.[3] Furthermore, between 1980-1990, the rate of students going on to postsecondary institutions increased by 10 percent.[4] These findings suggest that there has been some progress among low and high achievers, but relatively little progress among the vast bulk of students in the middle.

Problem Areas for Reform

Education reformers were forced to deal with many issues during the 1980s including the five major issues discussed below. Some of these were recurring problems for educational improvement but others only became clear as the decade progressed. These five issues relate to higher-order thinking, at-risk youth, governance, local variation in district response, and the need for coherence in reform.

Tensions between Basic Skills and Higher-Order Thinking. During the 1970s, the focus of state educational reforms was on relatively low-level academic knowledge and basic skills. Advocates for basic skills believed that schools had short-changed many students and that educators needed to take more responsibility in providing opportunities for learning. But the basic skills conception of what should be learned tended to be rudimentary, fact-based and focused on discrete, elementary skills. *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) focused attention on higher-order thinking, a concept involving the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for working in an increasingly technological economy. Advocates of the *A Nation at Risk* position, and others concerned with the general level and organization of instruction, argued that basic skills do not provide adequate preparation to make Americans economically competitive and socially competent in the coming decades. They argued that more complex skills are needed for new jobs that will be opening up in the future (Smith & O'Day, 1991b). To that end, they opposed traditional, teacher-centered pedagogy. Students, they said, should be active learners, collaborating with teachers to focus on a few complex problems rather than many simple ones. However, even today, relatively little is known about how to effectively reorganize instruction to teach higher-order thinking. As the decade progressed, reformers began to understand that this goal would require substantial changes in curriculum, testing, and instructional methods (Cohen & Spillane, in press; Smith & O'Day, 1991b). Reformers

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[3]The number of schools offering AP examinations rose by 88%, from 4,950 to 9,292; the number of students taking the examinations rose by 175%, from 119,918 to 330,080 (Advanced Placement Program, 1980 through 1990a).

The percentage of students passing AP examinations increased in Calculus AB & BC, English Literature, European History, Music Listening and Literature, Physics C Mechanics, Spanish Language and Spanish Literature. Passing percentages declined in all other subjects, including U.S. History, Biology, French and German, and Chemistry (Advanced Placement Program, 1980 through 1990b).

[4]The rate of students continuing on to post-secondary institutions increased from 50 to 60% of graduating seniors between 1980 and 1990 (Education Week, 1990).

began to propose that the core technology of schools be redesigned to place more emphasis on engaging students as learners than on developing a product (Elmore & Associates, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Murphy, 1991). Old ways of structuring classrooms with tracks and differentiated curricula do not develop students' capacities as workers, learners and critical thinkers, they said. The question is: how do we develop, adopt and implement policies that will accomplish the shift effectively?

At-Risk Youth. Respondents in most of the local districts in our study expressed concerns about the growing problems of at-risk youth in their districts. Districts were experiencing major increases in the numbers of students with learning problems attributable to economic and social needs: truancy, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, distressed families, etc. Even districts that had been functioning well in previous visits were becoming increasingly beset, sometimes overwhelmed by the needs of students whose social, emotional, and economic needs compromised their ability to fulfill increasingly demanding school curriculum and testing requirements.

While the numbers and needs of at-risk students grew, attention shifted away from the special programs and categorical grants intended to serve populations of children with specific problems. The new reforms focused on central elements of instruction—testing, courses offered, teacher preparation, and the like—suggesting change for all students. This shift of attention and the changing rhetoric of the time led some to question whether these new reforms would overwhelm two decades of concern for educational equity (Odden & Marsh, 1990). How would these reforms affect low-achieving students, particularly students whose social needs overwhelmed their ability to cope with an increasingly difficult curriculum? Could those students' social needs be integrated into an academic program that would prepare them for the new economy?

Governance. Many of the reforms proposed during the 1980s affected the distribution of control over schools. Most reforms motivated by *A Nation at Risk* and other early reports focused on centralized authority. State departments of education and legislatures assumed a great deal of responsibility for setting standards, mandating curricular standards, and establishing testing requirements. However, the failure of these centralizing reforms to realize significant improvement led some educators to question the validity of school organizational and governance structures. By mid-1980, restructuring had become a major focus of attention.

While the meaning of the term "restructuring" was ambiguous, one central idea was clear: to get control over the delivery of educational services closer to the people who were doing it. A deadening bureaucracy, where control was disconnected from both those directly responsible for providing education (teachers) and the system's clients (students and parents), was seen as the source of many problems facing American schools (Elmore & Associates, 1990). Two directions for development were suggested. First, faculties should be professionalized by giving more control to teachers. Second, parents should be empowered to effect their children's education, either through increased opportunities to participate in the operations of schools (as happened in Chicago), or through programs to

increase parental choice over the selection of schools. This discussion failed to take into account the centralization of control at the state level. Were these trends contradictory, as they appeared on the surface, or was there some way to reconcile them that would improve student learning?

State Response to Local Variation. It is clear that while state-level agencies adopt educational reforms for districts, the districts, schools, and teachers are the ones that implement the reforms. This makes the choice of policy vehicle an important issue. Vehicles such as mandates may establish minimum standards, but they may not encourage districts to actively address a reform agenda. Incentives may encourage districts to actively address a reform agenda, but may not give rise to the program the state had in mind. Requiring districts to fulfill state mandates is difficult if local capacity is inadequate. The state must be concerned with how its chosen policy vehicle will affect districts' inclination or ability to cooperate when the state develops policies.

Although the difficulty of securing local cooperation was originally anticipated as a barrier to policy implementation (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977), early studies in the 1980s indicated that local cooperation was obtained more easily than was thought. Some districts took state policies well beyond what was originally envisioned (Fuhrman, Clune, & Elmore, 1988). Some educators anticipated state policymakers by initiating local reforms that were similar to later state programs. In these districts, subsequent state reform reinforced and strengthened local priorities (Odden & Marsh, 1990). The variation in local response to state policy created an interest in such specific policy instruments as waivers and takeovers in the 1980s (Fuhrman with Fry, 1989), but also raised broader questions about how states and local entities could coordinate their efforts to promote reform.

Coherence. The final question was how to align reform efforts. The paradox of educational policy is that the formal system was designed to incorporate profound skepticism about state power in order to limit its misuse while the current political culture of education is optimistic about the use of government for progress (Cohen & Spillane, in press). Furthermore, the educational governance system is extremely fragmented with different levels—federal, state, district, school building—responding to different pressures in different rhythms (Firestone, 1989a). For states to maximize their impact on educational practice in such a disconnected system, they had to send consistent signals to local educators.

Yet two factors worked against such consistency. The first was the very process of developing a reform agenda. Some states did so through a series of separate bills or state board regulations. Even states that developed omnibus reform bills often did so by combining disparate, discrete elements; the volume of legislation was no indication of integration (Massell & Kirst, 1986). Second, and contributing to the first, was the range of issues that had to be addressed to assemble a coherent policy: target students, target skills, appropriate governance mechanisms, and appropriate policy instruments. Addressing these issues and others in ways that fit together coherently strained the

capacity of the policymaking process. Some states proved more adept than others at solving these problems.

The next chapters will expand the discussion of these issues.

Chapter 2
Trends in State Reform Policies

The sheer quantity and variety of measures enacted in the 1980s is remarkable. Thousands of bills were considered—for example, over 1,000 pieces of legislation concerning teacher licensure and compensation were introduced between 1980 and 1986 (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988). Student standards and curricular issues received similar levels of attention. Further, unlike earlier initiatives that focused on adding new programs and diversifying the curricula beyond traditional subjects, the majority of these reforms sought change in the academic core of schooling (Kirst, 1990). In addition to changes to existing state requirements, such as increased course and graduation requirements, states added content and program changes such as teacher induction and evaluation programs, and curricular guidelines, among other things.

The fact that other institutions such as universities, state boards, and state departments of education actively attempted reforms in the same areas made the policy environment more complex. Universities, for example, set admissions requirements for undergraduates that strongly shaped course offerings in many states. Sometimes, as in Arizona, changes in university requirements had a greater impact on the more advanced students than did changes in high school graduation requirements.

Businesses in many states formed groups that worked diligently to get their own concerns into the policy arena. Roundtables, discussion groups, business lobbies, and other business-oriented organizations became a visible and often effective force in state policy deliberations.

With so much policy activity occurring at one time, it is difficult to identify patterns of changes in state policy. To address this issue, this chapter discusses state reform in the six states studied by CPRE. We review reform trends in these states emphasizing the current status of the major reform efforts and the changes that have been implemented. Table 1 lists the six states' initial reforms and shows some of the major revisions or additions made during the 1980s. After the mid-1980s, the pace of enactment of new measures slowed in many states because of worsening fiscal situations, although reform typically stayed on the political agenda. In general, after the first burst of activity, the CPRE states continued to make incremental changes to their policies, maintaining and in a few cases adding new requirements for teachers or student standards. At the same time, however, some policies concerning standards were relaxed or rescinded, often in response to local pressures.

To assess these changes in more detail and clarify how well the parts fit together, we examine state policies for curriculum and academic standards, testing, curriculum and testing alignment, and teacher policies. We also look at changes in educational

governance. In this section, we briefly touch on local response to the reforms. The next chapter presents local responses and impacts in greater detail.

Study States with Comprehensive Curriculum Frameworks

California created curriculum frameworks for each subject. While the common theme for these frameworks was higher-order thinking, each had its own format. Mathematics had seven content strands including numbers, measurement and statistics, and probability to be included in each high school course. Frameworks were developed with local input. Social studies with nontraditional content was controversial. The state coordinated text approval so that approved books fit with the frameworks.

Florida had an approved list of courses that standardized course names and lengths. Behavioral objectives were provided for each. The language of the objectives allowed for higher-order thinking but it was not stressed. Florida approved textbooks centrally, but there was considerable local input into the process.

Georgia adopted its Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) in 1988. QCC specified objectives for each elementary grade and for secondary subject areas. Districts were expected to teach the courses but had some leeway as to sequencing. Districts were expected to adopt the state-specified objectives and develop more detailed curriculum guides. The state was creating resource guides to assist local efforts.

Curriculum and Academic Standards

States varied in their efforts to knit together curricular changes and academic standards in ways that would send consistent messages to school districts. At least three states developed fairly extensive comprehensive curriculum frameworks. Where frameworks existed, they had substantial impact on district curriculum work. All four California districts studied by CPRE organized their own work around the state frameworks. The California frameworks are voluntary and respondents generally saw them as helpful although one superintendent insisted on viewing them as a starting point, not a directive.

The Georgia curriculum had less uniform effects. The smaller, rural districts with many minority students and limited central office staff found elements of the state program helpful. However, a more sophisticated suburban district believed its curriculum was more advanced and intellectually challenging than that offered by the state, so a good deal of its effort went into circumventing the impact of the state's Quality Core Curriculum.

Curriculum frameworks were only part of the story, however. Rising graduation requirements were another. After passing its original reform legislation in 1983, Florida raised graduation requirements a second time; but it also increased the number of remedial credits that could count for graduation and allowed vocational courses to substitute for English, math, science, and electives. The state also established a minimum grade point requirement for graduation, but delayed implementation of the requirement.

Table 1: Trends in School Reform: CPRE States, 1980s

State	Student Standards	Teacher Policies	Trends Since Major Reform
CA b r o a d s c o p e	***Testing and Curriculum*** 1983 pupil testing expanded, coordinated with new curriculum frameworks and state-adopted textbooks. Financial rewards for test scores later dropped. ***Graduation Requirements*** 1983 reestablished with 130 units, first time since 1964. Added a semester of economics in 1985. ***Other*** 1983 incentives to extend the school day/year.	***Pay/Professional Structure*** 1983 mentor teacher program; $18,000 minimum salary. ***Testing and Certification*** 1983 certification testing. 150 hours of continuing education required every 5 years. Alternative routes for certification 9-12, later extended to K-12. Easier for districts to lay off or dismiss teachers. 1988 required teachers to teach in credentialled areas. 1983 loan forgiveness program.	***Modest extensions***[1] After omnibus SB813 in 1983 with SDE initiatives, continued implementation of original vision of curricular integration such as development of curriculum frameworks. Some incremental tightening of standards and discussion of new reforms, but no major initiatives. Voter initiative guaranteed 40% of state budget to education, but led to political and continued fiscal difficulties for schools.
FL b r o a d s c o p e	***Testing and Curriculum*** 1983 state required preexisting SSAT test for graduation;test suspended in 1990 and districts encouraged to give their own tests. State curriculum frameworks mandated. ***Graduation Requirements*** 1983 requirements raised to 22 credits, later to 24. 1985 the number of remedial credits allowed for graduation raised from 2 to 9, and vocational courses also can substitute. 1.5 GPA required for graduation, but implementation delayed. ***Other*** 7-period day mandated, later changed to an incentive.	***Pay/Professional Structure*** 1983 master teacher plan, later rescinded; career ladder program to replace it was never funded. 1984 Merit School program with staff stipends; modified in 1990. ***Testing and Certification*** 1986 teacher certification bill increases content knowledge requirements, 2.5 minimum grade-point average, tougher testing. Requires renewal of subject area certificates every 5 years, regular certificates within 2 years.	***Major reductions*** 1983 and 1984 omnibus RAISE reforms continued tradition of state activism. Rescinded major piece of teacher reform, and more loosening than tightening of student standards. Top-down mandate state, but recent moves give locals more latitude to implement, ie. to define a merit school. No large-scale reform packages since 1984, due in part to a deep fiscal crisis in the state.

[1]Note: These headings indicate the degree to which a state has moved from its original positions on teacher and student standards policies tracked here.

Table 1: Trends in School Reform: CPRE States, 1980s

State	Student Standards	Teacher Policies	Trends Since Major Reform
GA b r o a d s c o p e	***Testing and Curriculum*** Criterion-referenced tests in grades 1,3,6,8,10; norm-referenced tests in 2,4,7,9 with graduation contingent on passing 9. 1985 first grade readiness test for kindergarten promotion, in 1988 dropped paper and pencil aspect. 1985 required and in 1988 developed statewide curriculum and grade/course objectives. ***Graduation Requirements*** 1988 requirements changed from 20 (10 specified by the state) to 21 (13 specified by the state). ***Other*** No pass/no play, often revised.	***Pay/Professional Structure*** 1987 career ladder mandated, never fully funded, pilots currently in 5 districts. 1989 3 percent salary increase. ***Testing and Certification*** 1985 Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument for all teachers, revised so only new teachers have to pass. 1985 annual teaching evaluation with class observations, implemented 1989 with merit pay as reward in 1990. 1985 alternative route for certification. Recently made it more difficult to hire teachers for two or more subject areas.	***Modest reductions*** Omnibus Quality of Basic Education Act in 1985, with revisor bill in 1987. High mandate state, but more recent flexibility to locals. Subsequent changes to QBE have been modest but with some reductions in standards. After years of economic growth, experiencing declines with many programs now short of money. No major reform packages since 1987 but much incremental change.
AZ m o d e r a t e s c o p e	***Testing and Curriculum*** 1983 locals required to test basic skills in 8 and 12, 3 added later. Preexisting state-mandated 1-12 testing for all students changed to a sample of pupils for 1 and 12, but 1 and 12 testing later dropped. 1988 state developed and piloted new test (ASAP) coordinated with its list of essential skills; full implementation scheduled for 1991. ***Graduation Requirements*** 1983 increase from 16 to 20 credits, effort to raise to 22 credits failed. ***Other*** No pass/play rule for athletes, later extended to all students. 1989 foreign language requirements for elementary for 1991-92; state board delayed to 1992-93.	***Pay/Professional Structure*** Career ladder piloted for 5 years in 14 districts. Statutes became permanent in 1990 with up to 7 additional districts to be added during 1991-92. Not yet expanded to entire state as originally envisioned. ***Testing and Certification*** 1980 tests for teacher education graduates expanded in 1985 to also test applicants; 1989 admissions requirements for teacher education programs modified to allow some students to be admitted on probation.	***Major extensions and reductions*** Several special initiatives in 1986 followed the defeat of a more omnibus reform package proposed two years prior. Subsequently, mix of expanding and lowering original standards through legislation and regulation. Major efforts to integrate testing and curriculum, planned for full implementation in 1991. Otherwise no major reform initiatives since 1986, due in part to several years of revenue shortfalls.

Table 1: Trends in School Reform: CPRE States, 1980s

State	Student Standards	Teacher Policies	Trends Since Major Reform
MN m o d e r a t e s c o p e	***Testing and Curriculum*** 1985 optional local assessment program made mandatory. Performance Evaluation and Reporting put students on a 6 year testing cycle with some required items for all. Districts required to identify students without mastery of basic skills and establish assistance. "Learner Outcomes" requiring districts to demonstrate student mastery being piloted in 10 districts, planned for 1992 implementation. ***Graduation Requirements*** 1988 effort to raise from 15 to 18 defeated. Incentives for high school graduation of at-risk. ***Other*** 1985 postsecondary choice options for high school students. 1987 voluntary open enrollment; made mandatory in 1988.	***Pay/Professional Structure*** 1988 $10/pupil incentive for districts to conduct continuing professional development. 1988 mentoring task force established. Teacher Certification Board. ***Testing and Certification*** 1987 basic skills and subject exam for new teachers; subject exam later repealed. Exemplary Teacher Education grants for experimental teacher education.	***Major extensions*** State focused much of its reform effort on choice initiatives. Has a long tradition of giving locals much discretion and encouraging change through demonstration programs and technical assistance. More recent moves establish a greater state presence in standards-type policies, such as mandatory student testing.
PA s m a l l s c o p e	***Testing and Curriculum*** 1984 TELLS student testing to identify students needing remediation, with state aid for programmatic assistance; later changed to provide money for schools with increases in achievement and college-bound and less drop-outs. 1990 money for remediation dropped, and entire package under review. ***Graduation Requirements*** 1984 raised from 13 in grades 10-12 to 21 in 9-12, later revised to allow vocational courses to count toward graduation.	***Pay/Professional Structure*** 1984 mandated district induction plans with mentor for new teachers. 1988 minimum salary of $18,500 up from $6,000. Loan forgiveness program. ***Testing and Certification*** Piloted test for beginning teachers, fully implemented in 1989. Continuing professional development credits required for certificate renewal.	***Major reductions*** 1984 reforms primarily revised preexisting policies, with the exception of the TELLS testing and remediation program which has been greatly reduced since. Other changes generally relax standards policies. No major packages of reforms since 1984.

Pennsylvania raised its high school graduation requirements, and the requirements were made in such a way that they excluded most vocational courses. The Board later adjusted the law to permit inclusion of vocational courses that could be shown to satisfy academic graduation requirements, moving from its original goals to increase academic coursework for all students. In part because students still have trouble fitting regular and vocational courses into their schedule, the state board is considering a radical realignment of its high school graduation requirements. This change would be a move away from counting courses towards assessing outcomes, and it would make each district responsible for assessing competencies in particular curricular areas.

Arizona raised its graduation requirement to 21 credits, and added foreign language requirements at the elementary level. Georgia raised graduation requirements, added promotional gate tests and provided grade- and course-level objectives. California made modest changes in its graduation requirements, but most of its energy went to developing the curricular frameworks.

Minnesota acted a little differently. At the beginning of the period of strong state reform, it did not move to change graduation requirements as the other states had. In 1988 it began to consider adopting higher requirements, but in 1989 its attention was directed to adopting statewide learner outcomes, leaving decisions about process, such as class time and school organization, to the local districts. The state then decided that adopting higher graduation requirements would be contradictory to the spirit and intent of its concentration on outcomes and local decision-making.

Many of the state reform initiatives reflected an effort to "tighten up" without specifying what should be tightened. A major example was the effort of some states to increase graduation requirements without specifying what the content of required courses should be. Another initiative, "no pass-no play" rules which barred students from participating in extra-curricular activities unless they met certain academic criteria, sometimes led districts to develop coping strategies like having students register for both easy and hard courses. Students would withdraw from one course after they determined how well they were doing. There were also reports of reduced participation in extra-curricular activities. If true, this was a troublesome development since research shows that participation in extra-curricular activities has a high correlation with academic success.

Beyond these regulations, states encouraged other changes related to curriculum such as providing incentives for introducing middle schools or early childhood education programs, and encouraging districts to introduce course work in specific areas like drug education. Such requirements did not encourage systematic thinking about what should be taught in the curriculum, and how it should be taught. This created confusion, conflicting goals, and sometimes incoherence.

Testing and Accountability

Testing is one of the most powerful policies for influencing student learning. When test results become high stakes for either students, teachers, or districts, the content of tests becomes the core of district or school curricula. At the state level, testing programs of all varieties are pervasive. Over 40 new state testing provisions were in effect by the mid-1980s, but two-thirds of all state testing programs have histories that go back to the 1960s or 1970s (SEAC, 1988). The typical result of the new provisions was that test scores which were previously used mainly for student diagnosis and placement became measures of school, district, and teacher quality.

State testing programs, especially the high-stakes tests that affect graduation and promotion (Airasian, 1987), have come under fire in the last few years with organized action groups lobbying against them. Such programs have been criticized on a variety of grounds. Since most of these are minimum competency tests, there is a concern that they will direct instructional attention away from higher-order thinking (Airasian, 1987). They are also said to reduce teacher judgement and increase paperwork demands with minimal impact on what students learn (Wilson & Corbett, 1990). As with most standardized testing programs, there is a concern that cultural bias might work against certain minority groups. In addition, there are complaints that the tests require too much time away from the instructional program.

Testing in the Six Study States

Arizona: Since 1988, a sample of students in grades 2-11 have been tested using a nationally norm-referenced test. Students were to pass the 3rd and 8th grade test to be promoted and a norm-referenced test in 12th grade to graduate. In 1990-91, the state initiated a criterion-referenced test to be administered to a sample of students in 3rd, 8th, and 12 grades. This test will move away from multiple-choice items to newer, more open-ended formats that require more complex cognitive processes from students. All required subjects will be tested.

California: Since 1973, the California Assessment Program (CAP) has provided achievement data on school and district achievement in grades 3, 6, and 12. Samples of students are tested but individual results are not reported. In 1983, grade 8 was added. All grades test reading, math, and writing. Eighth grade tests also measure science and social studies. An effort has been made to assess higher-order skills through these tests. The change in governors may affect its future.

Florida: The State Student Assessment Test (SSAT) was adopted in 1977. Part I tested for minimum performance in reading, writing and math in grades 3,5, and 10. Part II tests for communication and math skills and passing was required for graduation after 1983. Use of the SSAT was suspended in 1990 and districts were encouraged to give their own tests.

The research on the effects of such testing programs is mixed. Winfield (1990) presents relatively convincing evidence that even minimum competency testing can increase student achievement in middle schools and high schools for those who stay in

Testing in the Six Study States (cont'd)

Georgia: QBE expanded the Georgia Student Assessment. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills occurs in grades 2, 4, 7, & 9. In 1988, the California Assessment Test was used to assess 1st grade readiness but was later abandoned for a state-developed test. State criterion-referenced testing occurs in grades 1, 3, 6, 8, and 10. The 3rd grade test is a gate for promotion, and the 10th grade High School Basic Skills Test is required for graduation.

Minnesota: The Performance Evaluation Review (PER) is a state-mandated, criterion-referenced evaluation procedure. Districts develop tests of state-defined standards in 6 curriculum areas. Each student is tested at least once each 6 years in each area, and results are reported to the state. The state developed an item bank from which districts may construct tests. The state is currently developing Outcome Based Education (OBE) which extends the basic strategy by providing more detailed learner outcomes and test items for assessing them.

Pennsylvania: In 1984, the state adopted TELLS (Test for Essential Learning and Literacy Skills), a minimum competency test for grades 3, 5, and 8 to determine remediation needs and allocate funds for assistance. In 1990 a new test form was used that moved towards higher-order skills. The remediation budget was halved. No remediation funds were budgeted for 90-91. The state was reconsidering the test although no plans had been made to cancel it.

school, but Catterall's (1989) study suggests that such tests do encourage students who fail them to drop out. Falling graduation rates in states that required passing scores on such tests in order to graduate may bear this out. For example, Florida and Georgia both instituted graduation gate tests, and both states experienced precipitous declines in graduation rates[5] (National Dropout Prevention Center, 1988).

Given the criticisms of state testing programs, two trends are notable in these six states. First, there is a move to reduce minimum competency testing. This is most conspicuous in Florida's suspension of its SSAT program, and the apparent phasing out of Pennsylvania's TELLS test. Georgia substituted a developmental assessment for a norm-referenced test as an entry criterion for first grade, and adopted matrix sampling instead of full cohort testing for its Georgia Criterion Referenced Test. Second, some states began using their testing programs to address higher-order skills through the introduction of more complex content and diverse assessment formats. California's CAP program and Arizona's ASAP were clear examples of such developments. These developments were part of a national move to revise and upgrade testing generally and to move into new testing technologies (Rothman, 1990a).

[5]Florida's 1984 graduation rate was 62.2 percent, ranking 48th in the nation. By 1988 it had declined to 58 percent, 51st in the nation. Georgia's 1984 graduation rate ranked 46th in the nation at 63.1 percent. By 1988 it had dropped to 49th, with a 61 percent graduation rate.

Another development involving testing was that of tying test results to financial incentives for teachers. While this strategy is rare in American education, four of the six study states provided performance-based incentives to teachers. In three states, Arizona, Florida and Pennsylvania, these incentives are or were linked in part to test performance.

Whatever the mechanisms involved, teachers reported that testing programs had a greater impact on their behavior in class than curricular changes, especially curricular changes involving increased course requirements (Shujaa, 1990).

Performance-based Incentives

Arizona's pilot career ladder allows the 15 participating districts to provide performance-based increments to teachers in the program. Districts design their own plans that specify the rules for eligibility and evaluation. While there is in-class observation, evaluation also includes students' test scores.

Florida canceled its merit teacher program after 2 years of unrest. It recently operated 2 programs that provided incentives to whole school staffs. The Merit Schools program provided funds to schools in participating districts whose test scores were among the top 1/4 in the district. Districts could design some details of the assessment system. While this program has been discontinued, $10 million is available for schools that do well on other indicators like dropout rates and postsecondary remedial programs.

Pennsylvania initially distributed remedial education money to schools based on TELLS. Fears were voiced that this practice provided an incentive to keep passing rates low, so rules for allocating funds were changed. The School Performance Incentive Program awards funds to schools showing significant improvement in at least 1 of 3 areas: student achievement, dropout rate, & college attendance.

Curriculum and Testing Alignment

An important concern regarding tests is whether, and how, they are aligned with, and reinforce, the curriculum. Historically, Americans (unlike Europeans) developed their tests to be "curriculum free." One important function of tests was to identify children with talent who went to schools that provided weak preparation (Resnick & Resnick, 1985). The disadvantage of the curriculum-free testing approach is that the opportunity to use testing as a reinforcement or incentive is lost. Instead, both tests and curricula become extremely general because they must cover so many contingencies. The skills taught and tested are usually very basic (Cohen & Spillane, in press).

Over the last decade, there has been a move to increase the alignment between what is tested and what is taught. Doing so can create better opportunities to focus on underlying skills and relevant content.

States have adopted two strategies; both are hierarchical, but differ in the way the local role is designed. In the first strategy, the states develop tests to which districts and schools must respond by aligning their instructional practices. As an example, Arizona

was making a significant effort to develop its Arizona Student Assessment Program (ASAP) criterion-referenced testing program, leaving much discretion for local districts to design their own curriculum in reference to it. Even before it was in place, districts began to adjust their curricula accordingly. In the second strategy, alignment can occur primarily at a single government level. California, for instance, provides both a testing system, the California Assessment Program (CAP), and curriculum frameworks. The intention is for the framework and tests to complement each other although in practice one component has sometimes been developed ahead of the other. Georgia's Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) and the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) are also synchronized, although the QCC is more comprehensive than the CRT.

The first strategy clarifies intended outcomes and gives school districts considerable autonomy in determining how to achieve those outcomes. However, it can lead to weak linkages if local districts do not conform to state intent. Moreover, tests wind up determining curriculum. The totally state-initiated strategy allows the state to offer assistance as well as control by providing helpful curricular materials, thereby potentially making adjustment to the test both more palatable and more pedagogically sound. However, it may also lead to inflexibility.

While curriculum-testing alignment is a powerful way to influence what is taught, there are at least four potential pitfalls to overcome:

Testing the Wrong Content. In particular grade levels and content areas, California teachers reported that the CAP was not aligned with the state frameworks. Also, since many learning activities are textbook based, it was suggested that assessments developed without accounting for that fact may be inadequate to assess the full extent of student learning.

Giving Multiple Tests and Mixed Signals. Most districts give their own tests as well as those required by the state. They may give both norm- and criterion-referenced tests, sometimes administering more than one of each. This raises a question about which test counts if they are not aligned. Thus, efforts to move to a new curriculum were impeded because the appropriate test was not in place. The old test reinforces the old approach. Inevitably, the high-stakes test will win out, but if it is a regressive test, e.g, a basic skills graduation examination, change will be slowed.

Overcompensating. One small district's reading scores on a state minimum competency test did not meet its own expectations in one particular grade. To address the deficiency, the assistant superintendent introduced a new reading curriculum in that grade and pressured teachers to use it. The result was a significant increase in reading scores on the test, but a decrease of almost twice the magnitude in mathematics scores. The concern and effort in one curricular area can lead to neglect and declining performance in another.

Working Against Higher-Order Thinking. The interrelationship of basic skills and higher-order thinking is not fully developed in available models of integrated instruction

and testing, but assessments that focus only on basic skills will institutionalize instructional models that emphasize the one at the expense of the other. For example, the original Georgia tests and curriculum were well aligned for basic skills instruction, but impeded any focus on critical thinking and synthesis of learning.

Teacher Policies

States experimented with three kinds of teacher policies: recruitment and certification standards, performance assessment, and staff development.

Recruitment and Certification Standards for New Teachers. Policies to increase standards for teaching affected recruitment, certification and professional development. When we consider the problem of mixed signals, the notable characteristic of recruitment and training policies was their limited connection to curriculum and testing. In fact the recruitment problem was first and foremost a matter of numbers. Districts fell roughly into two groups. Most districts in the sunbelt states had growing enrollments and needed (sometimes desperately) to hire teachers to keep up. Others, usually in the north but elsewhere as well, had stable or declining enrollments. They might have needed to hire for special projects or retrain existing staff to avoid layoffs, but recruitment was not a problem.

Two sets of state policies affected hiring. The first were those that influenced salaries. Teacher salaries dramatically increased early in the decade (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988). By the end of the period, weakening economic conditions in several states and districts appeared to slow the rate of the increases. Sometimes salaries were sustained at the price of class size. At least one rapidly growing district was unable to engage the number of teachers required to maintain its past pupil-teacher ratio because of substantial declines in state support.

States' certification policies also had an impact on local district hiring. A mix of tests, course requirements, and new teacher performance assessments sometimes created problems for districts that needed large numbers of new teachers. Emergency certificates were often employed to counter the effects (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988).

In the area of teacher certification, the big development in the 1980s was the expansion of teacher testing. Forty-six states now require some form of teacher testing, either before admission to a college teacher preparation program or before receiving certification. Many teacher tests emphasize basic skills knowledge, but the National Teacher Examination (NTE), the most common test mandated for certification screening, includes a component on professional knowledge of teaching and provides for testing in specific subject areas (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988; McCarthy, 1990).

The usefulness of most basic skills tests is limited to ruling out fundamentally unprepared teachers. Wherever they were used, however, at least two undesirable side

effects developed. The first was their impact on minorities. A disproportionate number of minority teachers and teacher candidates failed to achieve state-mandated cutoff scores. Many of the veterans who failed were considered by their districts to be very good teachers. Additionally, researchers found that non-academic instructors were affected disproportionately by the tests. In Texas, for example, many vocational teachers were considered to have valuable knowledge in their skill area that was not tested on the state's teacher exam and was then lost to students because of test results (Shepard & Kreitzer, 1987).

The second was the unexpectedly high hidden costs of administering the tests. Expected expenses for preparation and administration of the actual tests were compounded by unexpected costs for preparing the test takers, compensating them for the time needed to take the test, and costs for remediation and use of testing sites. Shepard and Kreitzer (1987) estimated the actual total cost of administering the TECAT (Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers) was $35.6 million, while the legislature had allocated $4.8 million for its development, administration, and scoring.

Among the six states, California, Florida, and Minnesota added or expanded existing teacher certification and testing standards. However, cost considerations and a strong protest led Minnesota to repeal its new subject matter tests for teachers already in the classroom the year following its passage. Pennsylvania recently introduced a basic teacher certification test. While there was some evidence that the preparation of those in Pennsylvania teacher education programs improved, a number of districts reported that the certification process made it harder to get new college graduates certified before the school year began.

A certification procedure of longer standing than teacher testing is required coursework. In the late 1980s, Florida narrowed and tightened secondary subject-matter certification, making it more difficult to hire one teacher for two or more subject areas, (e.g., math and science teachers). While knowledge of subject area content was already necessary for teaching, gearing certification to college courses created new dilemmas for districts. There was often considerable variation in what teacher training programs offered, and district personnel officers reported that it was not always clear that those who took the courses were prepared to teach in the field. Further, course-based certification reduced flexibility and sometimes ruled out people who were considered capable of teaching a subject. As a result, Florida high schools had more problems hiring one person to teach in two different low-enrollment course areas.

Certification devices in the six states were often problematic. Most had a number of loopholes so that efforts to tighten entry into teaching were often counterbalanced by alternative routes and waivers that allowed districts to continue hiring under-qualified teachers. This was especially true in districts that were short of staff. Moreover, none of the devices were linked to ongoing reform efforts in curriculum and testing. They tended to set minimum criteria of somewhat questionable relevance. Moreover, new certification standards sometimes created problems for districts in high growth areas because the

requirements made it difficult to recruit teachers from out of state. Georgia's Teacher Performance Assessment requirements, which applied even to experienced teachers from other states, was an especially good example of this problem, but Georgia dropped the TPAI for new teachers in 1990.

Performance Assessment. Another development of the 1980s was the establishment of statewide performance assessments for teachers, but this was confined to a handful of states. By 1988 only seven states had such systems (Rudman, 1988). Georgia was a pioneer of this approach with the Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI), which is being used by administrators to evaluate all teachers. New teachers are observed and assessed using the long form of the instrument which otherwise is only used when veteran teachers are found to be deficient in a number of areas. Other states use assessment and evaluation systems to determine which teachers will be awarded performance bonuses, additional school and district responsibilities, or career ladder promotions. Many of the teacher evaluation systems are based on direct instruction and classroom management. While they are useful for preparing teachers to teach basic skills, their contribution to developing the instructional skills necessary for higher-order thinking is less clear.

Staff Development. Staff development was a common reform in the six states. Some had specific requirements for staff development. Minnesota awarded incentives to districts that implemented staff development programs. Georgia required all districts to submit staff development plans and awarded state money to districts for that purpose. Pennsylvania introduced an orientation program for beginning teachers, and a required staff development activity once in five years for all experienced teachers who had not received Master's degrees (Act 178). Nevertheless, only Minnesota of the CPRE study states had made any arrangements for integrating staff development into curricular reforms. Often districts or schools organized staff development based on assessment of local desires or needs, with little apparent consideration of new curricular and instructional goals.

Changes in Educational Governance

Changes in educational governance in the 1980s were complex and seemed to be contradictory. The major development was a centralization of control in certain areas at the state level. The changes in state curriculum, testing, and teacher policies described above limited local discretion over what would be taught, and by whom, while mandating the ways in which progress would be assessed. Such centralization was partially limited by inconsistencies between policies and changes over time that either confused local educators or reduced requirements, thereby giving the local educators more leeway.

Yet, the trend towards centralization was conteracted in part by intentional efforts to bring additional actors, either parents or teachers, into the decision-making process. While efforts to enfranchise additional interests were usually initiated locally, there were a number of state efforts. Because these have received less attention, they are described

here at some length. For instance, some states initiated programs that required wider participation in local decision-making. These included the school-parent councils designated by Georgia's educational reform, and the requirement that teachers participate in the design of local staff development programs mandated by Pennsylvania's Act 178. Arizona's state career ladder gives districts considerable discretion in the design of their programs. The program allows districts to develop their own evaluation system with the constraint that some student outcome data must be used.

Other states that were not part of the CPRE study also introduced measures that had the effect of increasing school and/or district autonomy. Utah's career ladder allows funds to be spent in four categories and specifies minimum or maximum percentages that can be spent in two categories, but otherwise leaves decisions on program design to local educators within these broad constraints. Other states' statutes more specifically granted control of individual schools to site governing boards. An extreme version of this change was the Illinois law that set up boards dominated by parents and community members to oversee the operation of each school in Chicago. Kentucky's far-reaching reform act has a similar provision.

While some states and districts used formal methods to encourage decentralization, they also did so by informal means. Six Pennsylvania districts were recognized by a combined committee of the Departments of Education and of Labor and Industry as representing a new, more cooperative approach to labor/management relations. Teachers in these districts were involved formally in many decisions at the school and district level and consulted less formally on others. With no state funding, these districts had developed their programs internally in response to local needs. However, state recognition helped formalize and legitimate those programs as well as publicize the local strategies for use by other districts. Similarly, New Jersey piloted a Cooperative Relations Project to empower teachers and develop ways to promote cooperative change in schools. The Department of Education provided assistance, a private consulting firm, and additional funding, to help districts develop new means to formally involve staff in district decision-making and help principals and teachers learn new ways to work together.

Another approach to decentralization is one advocated by the National Governors' Association (1986) which promotes moving to a more outcome-driven approach to accountability. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander (former governor of Tennessee) advocated a "horse trade" that would give educators more control over the process of education if they would agree to meet certain outcome standards. Minnesota's Outcome Based Education (OBE) is an example of this approach (National Governors' Association, 1986). The Minnesota State Board is currently delineating Essential Learner Outcomes (ELOs) that must be satisfied for students to graduate. Districts and schools will decide on student seat time and course offerings as long as objectives are met. An additional element of participation in this case is the development strategy that features a consortium of state curriculum, instruction, and testing people, working with local districts that received research and development grants to pilot the concept.

One decentralizing policy did not specifically change district decision-making systems, but increased the options for where children could attend school. Choice policies change district/parent relationships by placing decisions about school attendance in the purview of parents and students instead of school districts. The concept driving this reform is an economic one: the use of markets, supply and demand, and competition to force districts to improve their instructional programs.

Minnesota, for instance, allowed students to cross district lines (within restrictions imposed by court-ordered desegregation), opt for alternative high schools, apply to post-secondary programs, and attend other high schools within the district. The policy was based on the belief that parents and students ought to be able to choose from a variety of programs, that districts have monopoly interests that create disincentives for change, and that possible loss of state foundation funds will cause school districts to improve their programs to remain competitive. Iowa and Arkansas also have state choice programs while individual districts like Milwaukee adopted local choice.

Another important development regarding educational governance was the reduction in the size of some state departments of education. Pennsylvania reduced the size of its department early in the 1980s. The Utah legislature considered strategies such as eliminating both the State Board of Education and the Office of Education. Utah, Massachusetts, Delaware, New Mexico, and Virginia are also developing reduced models with different missions for their education departments. In the 1990-91 session of the Georgia legislature, the Department of Education experienced cuts by the legislature, Governor Miller appointed a task force to study ways to cut back on the DOE (among other state agencies), and plans were made to curb its regulatory power and expand its technical assistance mission.

The implications of these changes for governance depend on how reduction takes place. When Pennsylvania's department shrank, technical assistance functions were reduced first. Nevertheless, the intention was to maintain monitoring for compliance, even though smaller staff made such monitoring erratic. The department effort was supplemented by a similar effort of the auditor general's office. Virginia's new Superintendent received legislative authorization to reduce compliance monitoring in favor of providing service and the state's Department of Public Instruction is being completely restructured. In several states, the declared intent is to delegate significant authority to the district level (Schmidt, 1990).

In effect, both centralizing and decentralizing tendencies are progressing simultaneously. It is difficult to find any overarching pattern here, but a tendency towards moderation was apparent in the six states we followed most carefully. Those that were most comprehensive and mandate-driven, notably Florida and Georgia, progressively reduced their regulation from a peak reached in the mid-1980s when their omnibus reform bills passed. On the other hand, CPRE study states that traditionally supported local control and employed incentives to persuade locals to take action were initially less aggressive in legislating reform, but became more active in testing and curriculum

development in the last few years. Minnesota and Arizona are examples of this trend. Minnesota was attempting to maintain its local control tradition by allowing districts to make process decisions while the state makes outcome decisions.

Conclusion

The greatest volume of state reform activity was concentrated in the period from about 1983 to 1987. The initial rush of activity was followed by modifications and refinements of existing policies in response to problems encountered in the field. By the end of the decade the amount of reform activity was notably reduced.

It is clear that the parts of many state reforms did not fit coherently together. Some states initiated curriculum frameworks and guidelines that were linked to testing programs. However, other student standards policies did not fit into the framework established by curriculum and tests. No link was made between those policies and others to improve teacher quality, or to bring teachers and parents more deeply into the district decision-making process.

A few states, like California, concentrated on developing higher-order thinking, but others attended much more to basic skills while considering ways to incorporate more sophisticated thinking skills into the curriculum. Few policies addressed systematically the problems of teaching at-risk youth or higher-order thinking. While a major trend was to centralize control in the areas of curriculum and testing, significant steps were taken to increase district, school, teacher, and parental responsibility in other areas. Trends towards decentralization of process decisions and local discretion were identifiable. Nevertheless, because of the volume and often contradictory messages of new policy requirements, districts had to do a great deal to make sense out of the separate and changing policies emanating from the state.

Chapter 3
Trends in the Local School Districts

Districts' responses to state reforms varied from minimal compliance to active use of reform initiatives. The composite effect has been some, though not drastic, change in both academic standards and teacher quality, as districts and schools continued to move slowly towards educational improvement. The fact that districts moved forward slowly and incrementally was a function of the complexities of the implementation process and situations at the local level. Decisions about how to respond to state policies requires consensus among a coalition of district leaders (Firestone, 1989b), and actual implementation requires considerable development and learning (Huberman & Miles, 1984).

A number of factors influence district response to state policy. State policy activity—content, instructional level addressed, volume of reform, and frequency of policy change—affects district activity. In particular, some characteristics of policies are especially compelling and likely to cause a response. In addition, the decisions districts make in response to reform are strongly influenced by the local context (Fuhrman, Clune & Elmore, 1988; Farrar et al., 1986) which includes demographic and financial factors, the preferences of their communities, and the skills and interests of their staffs. Some districts respond more actively to state policies than others because they face less pressures or are more able to cope with the problems they have. Furthermore, districts may initiate changes of their own that lead them in the same direction as state policy without external involvement.

In this chapter we look at these factors within the framework of district response to state policy in the 21 districts in the CPRE study. First, because the original purpose of the study was to track state reform policies in the areas of curriculum, testing, and teacher quality, we describe district efforts to deal with those issues. This analysis discusses concerns addressed by the districts and also suggests how state policy affected local efforts. Second, in order to clarify why some districts moved slowly and incrementally while others moved faster, and how state policy affected local change, we describe the issues that districts faced that were not on the reform agenda. Some issues were left over from earlier reform efforts; others reflected important local shifts. Third we examine the differential responses of school districts to identify the districts that have made most constructive use of state policy. Two final sections examine how the volume and rapidity of change in state policies overloaded the capacity of some districts to cope, and address the difficulties in assessing the effects of district changes on educational outcomes.

Data came primarily from visits in 1989-1990 to the 21 districts in the six study states. These districts represent the diversity of American school districts nationwide. They include large urban centers, medium sized cities, suburban districts, small cities,

rural districts, districts with both city and suburban sections, a secondary school-only district, and county districts that include cities, towns and sparsely populated areas.

Local Developments in Curriculum, Testing, and Teacher Quality

Active Curriculum Developers

A suburban district in Arizona was in the middle of a five-year curriculum development effort that incorporated the bulk of the staff. The new, objectives-driven curriculum was being tested for student relevance and ability level. The plan was to include cooperative learning, high technology and a more holistic approach with interdisciplinary courses.

A progressive medium city in California was developing a district-wide scope-and-sequence to assure standardization of courses across high schools. It also had a $65,000 grant to develop "Integrated Thematic Instruction" in the elementary and middle schools. Finally, because its Hispanic population was growing, the district's bilingual program was growing extremely rapidly.

A suburban district in Georgia had several curriculum development efforts under way. The literature and writing curricula were being revised to emphasize whole language instruction. A curriculum was being developed for parents so they could help their children more effectively, and a sex education program was beginning.

Many local school districts took steps to improve their curriculum, testing and teacher quality. Sometimes these steps were in compliance with state actions, sometimes they were locally initiated, and sometimes they were a mix.

Curriculum. The development and revision of curriculum was pervasive. Local efforts varied in philosophy, scope, and content, and were as broad and encompassing as all subjects and grades, or limited to narrow programmatic goals. Further, local curriculum staffers clearly followed national trends and reached out to resource organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics which developed a set of standards. Districts also turned for assistance to private non-profit groups, and business and industry.

Eight of the 21 districts studied were active curriculum developers. Most had several activities under way at once and tried to incorporate cutting-edge ideas into their curricula. These districts varied in their experience with district-coordinated curriculum development. Some were old hands, while others were doing something new. Another seven districts had a moderate level of activity while six districts had a low level of activity.

Three themes stood out in these curriculum development efforts. The first is the variety of activities among the more active districts. Some, like the development of district-wide scope-and-sequences to coordinate what was taught across schools and grades and special efforts to integrate content across discrete courses (in three districts), brought more coherence to what was taught. Many other changes, such as the introduction of

drug-education curricula, appeared more as discrete projects than part of an integrated view of what should be taught.

Second, in seven districts there was some indication of a special interest in developing higher-order thinking. In one suburban district, this theme came through in a long-term interest in providing a solid preparation for college to a largely middle-class clientele. More typically, however, there was an effort to incorporate newer thinking in the field into the curriculum. The quality of these efforts is difficult to assess, but it is notable that interest in higher-order thinking showed up in at least a modest level in urban and blue-collar districts as well as the more affluent.

Inactive Curriculum Developers

A medium city in Pennsylvania focused on complying with state requirements. The district had increased science and math courses to meet new state guidelines but "bent" the rules by counting vocational courses as science to allow students to continue taking courses in those areas.

A small Georgia city was making sure that new texts purchased fit with state criterion-referenced tests. The district had also added a drug education program.

A city/county district in Florida had aligned its curriculum with the state several years ago and appeared to be doing little to upgrade it. It still sought ways to require fewer courses than the state mandated.

The third theme was a concern for at-risk youth. Two clusters of districts stood out. The first cluster consists of the four large cities where this topic was *the* educational issue above all others. Some of these were taking unusual and creative steps. One raised its high school graduation requirements above the level set by the state, but, influenced by the research on retention and dropouts, allowed students to progress through the grades with their peers even if they did not pass all courses. It also had an elaborate program of night and summer schools to help students to keep up. Another had an effective schools program where the kind of intervention depended on the percentage of students not passing district-administered tests. After an extensive effort to adopt a uniform curriculum so content for low-achieving students was not watered down, a third city initiated an elaborate restructuring program to make its extremely large high schools more hospitable to students.

A second group of six districts was sensitive to the issue but not overwhelmed by it. The group included some of the more sophisticated suburban districts that might not be expected to give this population special concern. However, these districts had notable immigrations of students with special needs: English was their second language, their families were below the poverty line, they came from broken homes, or they suffered from substance abuse involvement. These factors meant many had problems coping with school. In their typically proactive way, these districts developed small programs to serve this growing population better, including alternative schools, drug awareness programs, and after-school programs for latchkey children.

There are indications that districts lacked knowledge about how to provide low-achieving students with more demanding academic content and still keep them motivated. One school department, which had originally elected to develop more rigorous academic content for middle-track students, had to rethink its decision in the wake of repeated student failures. The proliferation of remediation, after-school programs, summer schools, and other programs provides further testament to this knowledge gap.

While the details of what each district did varied considerably, those in particular states seemed to have a common agenda and language of discourse. The issue for Pennsylvania was how to add the new courses made necessary by increased graduation requirements and how to handle the problem created by the simultaneous raising of general and vocational requirements. Each district had its own way of adding the required courses. Some made serious efforts to design new ones to meet the intent of the law. Others retitled existing courses, while still others complied minimally with the state intent while focusing on the special needs of their large numbers of at-risk students. The Pennsylvania State Board of Education began meeting to reconcile and integrate its regular and vocational curricula to overcome this problem. California districts had a more common language for discussing course content that came from the state's curriculum standards.

State policies often influenced the cognitive level of curriculum in school districts. Most California districts found the state's standards useful and challenging. The standards were viewed as helpful for both urban and suburban districts, partly because districts found the emphasis on higher-order thinking useful. Georgia's QCC (Quality Core Curriculum) originally focused on basic skills. The rural districts that had not previously engaged in much curriculum development and had large numbers of low-achieving students found it helpful. However, sophisticated suburban districts with a history of independent curriculum development and a concern for higher-order thinking often objected that they had to give up more intellectually challenging courses in order to comply. Interest in higher-order skills has recently entered deliberations in Georgia's state legislature.

Some state requirements increased the fragmentation of local curriculum development. These included the introduction of course work in specific areas like drug or sex education. Incentives for introducing middle schools or early childhood education programs were often offered without reference to other areas of school curriculum and organization. Such efforts discouraged systematic thinking about what should be taught and some risked increasing the number of topics to be taught with little consideration of how specific topics fit together. Moreover, while states set curriculum standards, they did not make substantial investments in staff development in general and especially in the kind of assistance that would help teachers more effectively deliver advanced content to low-achieving students. In fact, staffing and funding cuts in some state agencies, California and Pennsylvania for instance, exacerbated the problem.

Even in a state like California with comprehensive curriculum frameworks, there are indications that curriculum development may not have produced intended results. It often became an end in itself. As a teacher in one district said, "curriculum development in our district produces teaching courses, not teaching kids." Moreover, the curriculum development that happened did not always lead to new kinds of activities that would better support improved teaching and learning. As reported in Education Week (Rothman, 1990b):

> Despite research on the effectiveness of 'hands on' learning in science and math, more than 90 percent of students reported classes dominated by seatwork.

Further, the impact of curriculum development on classroom practice may be lessened by other influences. In the past, district curriculum guides have had less influence on what is taught than have textbooks. The same may be happening with newer guides whether initiated at the state or district level. Other research indicates that California teachers had not seen the frameworks. When teachers did try to teach to the frameworks, many misunderstood the intent and vision of instructional practice embedded in them so that what resulted was at best "a remarkable melange of old and new" and sometimes even less than that (Cohen & Ball, 1990, p. 249, see also Carter, 1990). The evidence suggests that at the classroom level, curriculum guides alone may not be enough to substantially effect practices.

This apparent weakness in the link between state policy and classroom practice requires considerable new research to determine why policy is not being fully implemented at the micro-level, and what can be done to strengthen the link. Current staff development and mentoring programs may need to be integrated into programs of curricular, instructional, and assessment reform.

In comparison to the limited impact of curriculum development efforts, the impact of tests has been much more dramatic.

Testing. Among the 21 study districts, testing—like chalk, textbooks, and football—was universal. All districts tested students. Two themes were apparent. First, all six states studied by CPRE had some kind of testing program. Second, 20 of the 21 districts used nationally norm-referenced tests. This appeared to be largely a local decision although two states (including seven of our districts) mandated specific tests.

Norm-referenced achievement tests attempt to compare the learning of students to national populations. Exactly what learning they assess is unclear. By one estimate the content of such tests may overlap with what is presented in textbooks by no more than 50 percent in some subject areas (Freeman et al., 1983). Such lack of overlap creates the likelihood that teachers will receive contradictory signals from curriculum and tests.

One way used to solve the problem created by norm-referenced tests was administration of criterion-referenced tests—tests that assess knowledge and skills in specific areas or courses covered. Seven districts, including the one that did not give norm-referenced tests, used these instruments. Since these tests were usually customized, their use may not be within reach of smaller districts that have limited assessment resources. Four of the seven were city districts, two were large suburban districts with reputations for sophistication within their state. The last was a rural district of 5,000 students that had limited resources but a sophisticated administration. One criticism of criterion-referenced tests is that they are often geared to the lowest common denominator and stress basic skills rather than higher-order thinking (Cohen & Spillane, in press). It was difficult to know how much this was the case with these seven districts. However, there were indications of such problems in at least two of them.

Tests have an impact that curricula lack because test results are usually made public. One of the most important trends in recent years is the expansion of the use of test scores not only for student assessment but also for judging school and district quality. As a result, consequences can be attached to them. For instance, they can change public confidence in the schools. One district had problems getting the public to vote for the property tax leeways needed to increase school funding largely because test scores were consistently low. Lack of public confidence was the reason why another urban district moved from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced testing. Administrators often object to this use of tests, especially when it becomes part of state policy. When the Pennsylvania Department of Education used its TELLS (Test for Essential Learning and Literacy Skills) testing data to rank districts throughout the state, administrators spoke out angrily against the practice.

Tests also affect students' careers. Arizona, Florida, and Georgia all had high school graduation tests (although Florida's was recently rescinded). Two of these states also had gate tests that students had to pass to be promoted to the next grade. Such tests created pressure on students but also on the schools to ensure that students made what was considered normal progress. Whatever the mechanism involved, teachers reported that testing programs had a greater impact on their behavior in class than curricular changes (Shujaa, 1990).

Whether or not consequences were attached, districts used tests in a variety of ways. First, there was an external demand for testing information. States required reports on the administration of their own tests. The public was very interested in test data which was taken as a measure of district, and sometimes school, performance. Almost all districts could, and did, provide extensive data on how their students compared with national averages in reading and mathematics achievement.

Another use of tests was for placing students. At least three states (Georgia, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania) required districts to use test scores to identify students for remedial assistance. In states with gate and high school graduation tests, districts identified students who had failed the tests and gave them special assistance to help them

pass in the future. While these were the most frequent placement issues, districts also mentioned using tests for grade and section placement and for selection into gifted-and-talented programs.

Tests can also be used to control schools and teachers, and to encourage certain kinds of planning. Although district administrators dislike state-wide comparisons of their systems, they often used tests to control schools. One Florida administrator welcomed the uniformity brought by the state's curriculum and testing reforms because he believed it gave him the capacity to compare across schools and identify programmatic weaknesses.

There are several ways to use test data for control and planning. For instance, two districts in the Arizona Career Ladder gave financial inducements to teachers to increase test scores, as the state required, although the criteria and number of teachers involved differed considerably between the districts. Across the states, four other districts required schools to submit plans to the central office that, among other things, required a discussion of how low-scoring areas would be improved. Without employing a planning process, two districts used tests to make certain teachers would teach the right content. Another district used test data to decide which beginning teachers to keep. One city district used test data to identify schools needing special assistance. Those with the lowest scores participated in a special assistance program where central office staff made suggestions to improve performance. The schools were monitored and compliance with district regulations was closely enforced. As scores increased, schools received less help but also more autonomy.

Use of test data for teacher planning or building renewal appeared to be limited. However, such use was facilitated by the presentation of test data in a "user friendly" fashion. Three factors increased such friendliness:

Timing. If there was too great a delay between test administration and return of the data, the information lost its salience. End of the year testing, especially the high-stakes variety, created a special dilemma. The earlier the test was given, the greater the pressure to get through the curriculum related to the test beforehand. However, if the test was given very late, the teacher could not use the information to help the students actually tested.

Format. Test data, as it was prepared by testing offices, could be formidable to teachers and principals. One district testing office in a medium-sized city was especially good at developing ways to present and display data to help school staff, and at discussing its meaning with those who used the data.

Concreteness. Teachers in one California district did not take the state testing data as seriously as they might because the matrix sampling system used did not allow them to attach scores to particular students. Here the use of test data as a broad indicator of building or district quality for which the test was intended

conflicted with teachers' interest in clinical data and preference for assessing test information in the context of what they knew about students.

Although we did not ask specifically about the phenomenon, respondents in four districts volunteered that preparing for state-mandated tests (or "teaching to the test" as it is commonly called) took place. These districts had large minority populations and a pattern of low achievement scores. In some schools, high school graduation tests put a premium on helping students get through. In one case, mathematics teachers of students who were scheduled to take the graduation test would devote a certain amount of time each day to the skills covered on the test before going on to the regular curriculum. Right before the test there would be special drills. One teacher said, "when students are freshmen and sophomores, we try to teach them the skills. [When they are seniors], we try to get them out." In another case, teachers did not share the central office's concerns about test scores so administrators tried to convince teachers and students to take the tests more seriously.

Teaching to the test was not only a strategy for improving test scores for low-achieving students. A fifth district used similar strategies to help college-bound students prepare for the SAT, a practice we expect to be widespread.

Alignment. Although teaching to the test was a short-term way to align curriculum and testing, more long-term efforts to coordinate tests and instruction also took place. As an example, Arizona was making a significant effort to develop its ASAP (Arizona Student Assessment Program) criterion-referenced testing program. Even before it was in place, districts began to adjust their curricula to respond to it. The same thing happened in districts in other states. For example a large district in Florida was developing standardized end-of-course tests and providing an item bank that teachers could use for diagnostic purposes. Given the district's emphasis on site-based management, this strategy allowed considerable leeway in developing local instructional responses to meet district learning goals.

Teacher Quality. Districts could improve teacher quality through both recruitment and staff development. However, most districts with growing enrollments viewed the recruitment problem as first and foremost a matter of numbers. Those that needed teachers most acutely developed strategies to meet their needs. Some had full-time recruiters who travelled around the state or country visiting colleges and attending teacher-hiring fairs. Hiring decisions might or might not be made with input from individual school.

Recruitment was intended largely to fill slots defined in grade or subject-matter terms. To these criteria, the need to hire minority teachers might be added. Questions about specific curricula or testing programs were too detailed to be of concern during hiring. Those involved in recruiting could make general statements about new recruits being "better trained in their content areas but weaker at classroom management" than

those hired in the past, but there was even less connection between recruiting and curriculum than between curriculum and testing.

At least one district visited in 1990 was simply unable to employ the number of teachers required to maintain what had been its past pupil-teacher ratio because of substantial declines in state support. Other districts found the salaries they could offer constrained by a mix of state and local financial shortages.

Districts viewed certification procedures largely as barriers that set minimum criteria of somewhat questionable relevance. Moreover, districts in high-growth areas reported that the more complex requirements, such as Florida's subject-matter certification and Georgia's in-class observation system, made it difficult to recruit experienced teachers from out of state. These teachers did not want to have to establish their competency yet again.

In addition to recruiting new teachers, the districts devoted varying amounts of effort to developing teachers already on staff. The approach to training could focus specifically on providing the expertise teachers needed to work with existing tests and curriculum, but other issues had to be considered as well. Sometimes these took precedence. Two issues recurred frequently. The first was assistance to beginning teachers. Several states had programs to support beginning teachers (e.g., Pennsylvania Induction Program, California Mentor Teacher Program). The second was need for continuing inservice training for all staff. This need was reinforced by state requirements in Florida, Georgia and Pennsylvania for continuing professional development to maintain certification.

The linkage between curriculum and staff development was often impeded by the tendency of some larger districts to plan inservice training programs using a teacher-centered approach. Planning typically began with a needs assessment survey, and a great deal of training was based on demand. However, what teachers requested did not always coincide with the skills required by the curriculum. Typically, this demand-based training was supplemented by centrally initiated programs that were more focused, especially when a new program was put in place. Still, considerable effort was spent on other issues. Given the problems noted with district inservice training in the past, including short duration and lack of follow-up coaching, this dispersal of limited resources across many needs and wants made it difficult to gear training to new curriculum.

Current District Priorities and Concerns

As state reform policies evolved, so too did the priorities of local districts. As diverse as these districts were, their concerns were remarkably similar. They included the following:

Growth and Decline. Some districts were preoccupied with growth. Four urban districts, three suburban and three small-town or rural districts (mostly in the South or

Southwest) were grappling with such issues as overcrowding, finance, construction, reassigning existing staff to new buildings, and hiring. Teacher certification requirements were often considered a deterrent to meeting the staffing needs, and waivers, alternative certification or other ways of circumventing requirements were frequently employed. But districts with good reputations claimed to have little trouble recruiting staff.

Conversely, declining enrollment was a factor in districts that were urban (four of the major cities), suburban (two districts) and small city or rural (four districts). While staff cutbacks were a concern, major reductions were avoided because many districts had growing populations with special learning needs. Staff members could be moved into special slots funded by federal or other categorical programs to serve those students. Two bigger problems for these districts were the loss of program options and the need to revitalize an aging staff.

Changing Populations and Needs of Students. A wide variety of districts reported that they increasingly had to attend to the needs of changing student populations, including the influx of more minorities, immigrants as well as natives with limited English proficiency, and students experiencing such problems as substance abuse, sexual abuse, low self-esteem, teen pregnancy, and parenting. Even affluent, suburban districts had to deal with increasing numbers of at-risk youth. State reforms that increased standards and accountability were considered by the districts not to match the needs of these students.

Programs designed to meet the needs of students addressed health and nutrition problems, the transition to high school, the need to improve morale and attendance, and home-school communication. Most were local in origin or connected to national foundation and private sector initiatives or federal youth employment programs. Only a few were responses to state at-risk or dropout prevention initiatives.

Desegregation. Continuing efforts to foster desegregation, including the development and expansion of magnet schools, were a major issue in 6 of the 21 districts. While recent or impending court orders did not generate the strife experienced earlier, the fallout from increasing numbers and concentrations of minority students, particularly in the urban areas, and the concern over inequity in the delivery of educational services was a major worry.

Teacher Contract Negotiations. Contract negotiations, sometimes accompanied by struggle and/or strikes, were a preoccupation in a majority of the districts throughout the decade. In several cases, large settlements created serious funding problems for district initiatives, changes in governance patterns (e.g., shared decision-making), and limitations on certain staff development programs. A few reform programs had been initiated through the collective bargaining process, but for many districts the energy and time required for negotiation distracted from school reform activity.

Leadership Turnover. Over two-thirds of these districts experienced superintendent turnover in the last two years. Superintendents of two major cities in the study were terminated in the summer of 1990. In fact, rapid superintendent turnover merited national attention by the end of 1990 (Bradley, 1990b). Such changes redirected district initiatives and created new priorities. The changes sometimes met with resistance, rancor, and reduced staff morale. Furthermore, several districts, particularly the big cities, faced questions about the competence and training of building administrators, an issue of increasing importance with the proliferation of site-based management.

Restructuring, Shared Decision-Making, or Site-Based Management. More than half the districts (13 of 21) initiated some form of school-based governance or structural changes. Such governance can delegate authority to principals without involving teachers more directly in decision-making. Hence, it is notable that 11 districts included teachers at some level of governance, including personnel hiring, testing and curriculum decisions, and administrative governance. Restructuring in one very large urban study district was largely driven by the teachers' union.

A number of other districts around the nation have undertaken massive restructuring programs to redistribute the locus of decision-making to individual schools via principals, teachers and parents (David, 1989). The Miami/Dade County story is the most celebrated. Louisville/Jefferson County in Kentucky, and New Orleans and Cincinnati are other examples, and Joseph Fernandez is working to gain the leverage needed to empower teachers to restructure the troubled New York schools. Most of these examples emphasize bringing professionals more into the decision-making process. Chicago's public schools use a different model to include parents. This district has established local school councils consisting of six parents, two community representatives, and two teachers, with the principal serving as an ex officio member. The councils are empowered to adopt school improvement plans, budgets, and hire principals.

Linkages with Business and Industry. Several districts, particularly the urban and suburban ones, have relationships with business and industry. These occur at both the district and school level, and help provided by business ranges from the symbolic to more meaningful political, financial, management, and substantive assistance. Business and industry support for education is growing, but the most effective form for such support is not yet clear. In some districts, the private sector has been a major impetus for educational reform.

Variation in Local Response to State Reform

Overall, then, districts varied considerably in their responses to state policies. Past accounts from this project reported that resistance to state policy was rare, but district reactions ranged from passive compliance to strategic response (Fuhrman, Clune, & Elmore, 1988). By 1989-90, these responses could be sorted more clearly on two dimensions: (1) locally driven reform activity; and (2) response to state reforms.

The first dimension was the presence or absence of *locally driven reform activity*. Fourteen of the 21 districts had reform or school improvement agendas of their own, including curriculum development and alignment, experimentation with alternative assessment, special and diverse programs, alternative structures, and a whole array of innovations. These were typically designed to meet their own locally determined needs and culture. The others maintained their existing programs, continuing pretty much as they had for some time.

The second dimension was active or passive *state reform response*. Eleven districts were selective, but active users of state reforms. They sought out state reforms that were particularly useful and aggressively sought to implement them. These districts might, however, vigorously oppose provisions that they saw as less constructive locally. The remaining 10 districts were more passive. Whether they disapproved of the reforms, lacked the capacity to respond more aggressively, or had competing but divergent commitments, they complied with requirements but did little more.

When combined, these dimensions yield four clusters: selectively active users with local reform agendas, passive users with local reform agendas, active users with no local agenda, and passive users with no independent agenda. In the following sections we discuss these clusters in more detail with examples of particular districts that fit in each one.

Local Reform/Selectively Active Response to State. The selective, active users of state policies with their own reforms, which included most suburban districts in the sample, typically utilized state reforms especially that *fit* their own plans. They would fight state reforms that did not. One district, for instance, which actively used state curriculum frameworks, refused to comply with state bilingual requirements. These districts were typically innovative, entrepreneurial, resourceful districts, with strong leadership and high capacity for change. They were usually known as "lighthouse" districts in their states and often lent leadership to the state on state reforms, because their own capacity was high.

These districts were frequently suburban and predominantly middle class. The medium-sized city had a limited population of disadvantaged students. Its staff was not as distracted by severe student problems. A survey conducted by the Policy Information Center of the Educational Testing Service (1990) suggests that districts in this category, that is, more affluent with low populations of minority students and high populations of professional adults, do not have a high level of policy changes, but that is not confirmed by our findings. The study districts that fell in this category were active in policy change.

This cluster's own reform initiatives included restructuring, shared decision-making, strategic planning, changes to accommodate at-risk students, extensive staff development, and major curriculum and assessment endeavors. These processes also facilitated implementation of state policies. For instance, one district in Arizona used the state's Career Ladder to lead curriculum development, staff development, peer coaching and

general school improvement. Another example was a California suburban district that used the state's curriculum frameworks because they fit well into its own curriculum development thrust. Such districts often appropriated state reforms for their own needs. The reforms were beneficial because the districts maximized the reforms. However, these districts were so resourceful that they might well have achieved the same ends even in the absence of the state policy.

Local Reform/Passive Response to State. Seven of the 21 districts had their own reforms and responded passively to state initiatives. Six of these were cities with large concentrations of minority students. These cities were so absorbed, even distracted, with their own problems (growth or decline, fiscal shortfalls, labor relations, changing populations, and large numbers of dropouts and at-risk youth) that the state reforms rarely had much impact on their agenda. There is an irony in this finding, since the failure of large urban districts to deal with high dropout rates and low test scores was a major reason for state action. Yet, the state reforms that emphasized raising standards added to the cities' problem rather than helping. Those districts initiated very different programs.

For example, respondents in two urban districts stated emphatically that there was not much fit between district and state priorities. Their overriding concerns were with preventing dropout, increasing self-esteem, and getting students to come to school. They viewed norm-referenced gate tests as "pushing students away." Their own initiatives included curriculum changes, efforts to infuse African-American history into the curriculum, and grouping schools according to performance to flexibly meet the needs of the students. Another city started a major health initiative, the fourth was involved in extensive bi-lingual education efforts, and the fifth in a school restructuring program.

Teacher certification reforms also met with ambivalent responses in these districts. Many agreed with this statement from one large city district official:

> 'Certified is not qualified.' A great part of the problem lies in teacher education institutions which are not preparing teachers for today's schools. We need professional standards, but teacher preparation programs don't train adequately for urban schools. They have no conception of what is involved.

Urban districts did respond minimally to state policies and did derive some benefits. As they modified their curriculum, they incorporated state guidelines and frameworks. Some saw positive aspects of state frameworks, as for example in stimulating a concept-based, rather than skill-based, approach in the California city. Districts also benefitted from funds for remedial education to help students who did not pass mandated minimum competency tests. There was some controversy about this, however, because some felt that the time spent in remedial classes could have been spent better in other types of learning opportunities.

Not all the districts in this cluster were big cities. At least one mid-size city and one small community had their own reform agendas and only passively used the state reform. The small city did not have the capacity to respond actively and still attend to its own agenda, despite its support for the state initiatives. Since the state was not mandate-driven, the district could make that choice. The small community only complied minimally because the reform did not fit its agenda.

No Local Reform/Active Response to State. Three districts lacked their own reform agendas but were active users of state reform. They tended to be small city or rural districts. They lacked an independent agenda largely because of their limited capacity and resources to generate one, but their leadership welcomed state reforms as opportunities to improve their schools. Thus, they went beyond compliance in responding to state requirements. Districts in this group tended to benefit significantly from state reform.

One example is a small Minnesota city with stable enrollment and resources. Its leaders acknowledged that the state agenda defined its whole education program. In this case, the state promoted Outcomes-Based Education and Achievement of Mastery. The district successfully exploited the flexibility in those programs to implement its own version of Mastery Learning and develop its own testing approach.

Another example is a small, rural Georgia district with serious problems in recruiting and retaining teachers. It converted the beginner teacher certification requirement (Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument or TPAI) into a recruiting benefit by offering personalized assistance to new teachers in preparing to pass the assessment. This extra assistance helped it solve its staffing problem, at least temporarily.

No Local Reform/Passive Response to State. The final cluster demonstrated little capacity for change or entrepreneurial leadership and were passive responders to state reforms. These districts were typically in small cities or towns, but at least one was a county district with a major city. Some of these districts were in states that used mandates as policy instruments so even non-innovative districts had to comply at least minimally with state regulations. As a result, state initiatives often filled a local leadership void even if little was accomplished from the perspective of state policy.

For example, a small city in Pennsylvania complied with new policies that could be handled with little more than administrative paperwork by such devices as renaming existing courses to meet state requirements. State policy also produced more visible educational activity like remediation classes that would not have been offered without external pressure. It also generated a structure to rethink staff development that would not have occurred without the requirement to produce a Continuing Professional Development Plan.

Another example of minimal compliance occurred in a county district in Florida that followed state grade-point-average requirements for graduation. Students were often

registered in an easy and difficult version of the same course. The higher grade was then recorded. The requirement became a scheduling and bookkeeping chore rather than a means to encourage students to do better in their work.

Because state reform policies provided a stimulus for some change, these districts did accrue some benefit from the policies even when relatively little was accomplished. Unlike in other districts, however, in these districts local leaders made no effort to creatively adapt the policies to insure they benefitted schools.

Omnibus Reforms and District Overload

The quantity of reform initiated also influenced district response. District leaders in the three states that passed omnibus reform bills, Florida, Georgia, and California, felt barraged with demands to change course schedules, testing programs, responses to monitoring and the like. One Florida superintendent complained:

> We are confronted with a plethora of new state requirements, many of which conflict with other state requirements and a rising level of local needs. The district is pressed hard to maintain its equilibrium. We need to stop and reflect on what we are doing to see if the programs are working. We can't do more.

This district had been on the cutting edge of implementing state reforms earlier but by the end of the decade was overwhelmed by state requirements and its own local problems.

Another Florida administrator noted that the state's continual changes in certification policies made it extremely difficult to keep teachers certified. Similar responses were made by Georgia administrators who felt that they could cope with policies that were not a moving target and that remained consistent over time. Overloading was also apparent in California where the Department continuously issued new curriculum guidelines, and revised lists of approved texts which left districts struggling to keep abreast of new policies, or delaying implementation even when they wanted to move faster. Two districts reported putting new curricula on hold to give staff time to absorb recent changes.

Elementary teachers in particular had problems keeping up with new curricular policies because each one was responsible for multiple disciplines. Perhaps the most serious overloading, however, occurred among low-achieving students where tough new curricular requirements, no-pass/no-play rules, extended school days, remedial programs, and a proliferation of promotional gate tests and other examinations created stress and left little flexibility in their schedules. Many educators believed that increased standards contributed to the likelihood that at-risk students would drop out (see also Catterall, 1989).

Some reforms, in both omnibus reform states and others, carried financial costs that were not fully borne by the states. Pennsylvania's TELLS program, for instance, originally required that remediation be provided for students who did not pass the state's

minimum competency test. However, the funds provided by the state for that remediation often did not meet the costs of offering the service.

Conclusion

What is notable about district reforms is the extent to which these districts attended to their own agendas. Districts made some curricular and teaching changes fit with national reform interests and state policies, but they also addressed local concerns. Sometimes changes reflected local demographic developments, leadership transitions, and concerns with reforms like restructuring that had greater life at the local than the state level.

Districts differed notably in their response to state policies. Urban districts in particular were so overwhelmed with the problems of dealing with large numbers of low-achieving students that their compliance was often cursory. Other districts' responses to state concerns reflected both local interests and local capacity. Some districts used and elaborated state policies. Others almost ignored them.

It appears that state efforts to tighten standards were, despite a lack of coherence and consistency, easily absorbed into district practices and integrated into district routines. Districts made state policies more coherent than they originally were, in part because of policy potential to enhance districts' symbolic and real control over work practices, and to promote public confidence. The impact of these changes at the classroom level, however, appears to have been limited. The reform goals of changing teacher practices, improving student performance, and providing greater exposure to academic content have only been partially realized. In part, the problem lies in the lack of coherence and specificity across policies. A larger cause, however, lies in the nature of the policy instruments used in this round of reforms. The simple rules and criteria for standards overlook the fact that a critical component of local skill and knowledge was missing: how to connect low-achieving and unmotivated students with more rigorous academic content. Finally, the quantity of reform attempted made a difference. Too much reform combined with too frequent changes, even in the details of policies, overwhelmed some districts and undermined their capacity to cope.

Chapter 4
School Finance in the 1980s

To place the reform movement in its fiscal context, this chapter first examines the overall fiscal picture for the decade. It then describes in more detail changes in revenues, and expenditures, teacher salary increases, and current finance equalization efforts before discussing the economic downturn at the end of the decade.

Decadal Trends in School Finance

The financial conditions of public schooling reversed several times during the 1980 to 1990 decade. After falling or steady revenues during the recession of the early eighties, many state economies began to rebound by 1983. During the early period, legislative interest in education had slumped, but the economic rebound coincided with the new interest in education stimulated by commission and research reports like *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, and the work of the National Governors' Association. School expenditures for public elementary and secondary education increased as a consequence of both fiscal strength and an ideology for reform. By the 1989 fiscal year, states and local districts were spending $179 billion, or roughly one-third of their total expenditures, on elementary and secondary public schools (NCES, 1991). These upturns came on top of a sudden shift in the long trend of enrollment declines. Real per pupil revenues increased by 27 percent (in constant 1980 dollars) during the years from 1980 to 1990.

While the trend in fiscal resources turned upward in the first part of the decade, revenues and expenditures for education peaked in 1986. Since then there was an overall decline in the rate of average growth. Now school funding faces an unsteady immediate future as states struggle with another recession and deep cuts in anticipated revenues. Yet viewed over a longer time period, the more general tendency towards growth seems to outweigh the episodic fluctuations in fiscal indicators. Table 2 shows the percentage increases in total education revenues and per-pupil revenues in each decade from 1940 to 1990 in constant dollars. Both measures show large gains in each decade, with the highest growth in the 1950s and 1960s. The increases have slowed between 1980 and 1990, but were still quite substantial.

During the last decade, the revenue share picked up by the federal, state, and local governments changed (see Table 3). The national average for the state share of the fiscal burden for public schooling hovered around 49 percent after dropping between 1982 and 1984. However, while the national average remained fairly stable, in at least 18 states the

Table 2
Decadal Changes in Education Revenues, 1940 to 1990
(in constant 1990 dollars)

Decade	Increases in total education revenues (in percent)	Increases in total per pupil education revenues (in percent)
1940-1950	36	37
1950-1960	126	61
1960-1970	116	67
1970-1980	22	33
1980-1990	23	26

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey, (various years), *Early Estimates: Key Statistics for Public Elementary and Secondary Education*, and unpublished data.

share of the fiscal burden declined between 1983 and 1989. In two of the CPRE states, Arizona and Florida, the shares dropped by 6.8 percent and 1.5 percent respectively.[6] The proportion of school revenues carried by local governments expanded during this period, in an amount roughly equivalent to the decline in the federal share of approximately 3 percent.

This tendency toward greater reliance on local revenues has had implications for school finance equity, as we shall discuss later in this chapter. In this chapter we will concentrate on fiscal trends only in the 1980 decade, which have been in flux. We will give our primary attention to aggregate movement at the national level.

Decadal Changes in Revenues and Expenditures

Despite the recession early in this period, total average revenues for public schooling rose by $103 billion in current dollars, or 105.5 percent, between 1980 and 1990. After controlling figures for inflation, the average gains appear modest but still substantial, with the increases registering at $22.8 billion (in 1980 dollars), or 23.4 percent over the decade (see Figure 3 and Table 4). Since enrollment grew more slowly than revenues, the overall change in real revenues per pupil was even higher at 27.2 percent. (See Table 5

[6]The biggest decline in state share occurred in South Carolina, where it dropped by 13.9 percent. The largest increase occurred in Wyoming, where state share grew 24.8 percent.

Table 3
School Revenue Share, 1980 to 1990

Fiscal Year[7]	Federal	State	Local
1980	9.2%	49.1%	41.7%
1981	8.7	48.2	43.1
1982	7.4	47.9	44.7
1983	7.2	47.7	45.1
1984	7.0	47.8	45.2
1985	6.8	49.0	44.2
1986	6.7	49.4	43.9
1987	6.4	49.8	43.8
1988	6.4	40.4	44.2
1989	6.4	50.0	43.6
1990	6.3	49.4	44.3

Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics*, selected years, Washington, DC.

for comparable information on changes in total expenditures.) The largest real revenue expansion per pupil occurred in 1985 and 1986 (4.6 and 4.5 percent respectively), but by 1990 the percentage increase per pupil dropped to its lowest point of the decade, at 0.9 percent—the same increase that occurred in the school year ending 1983. Of course there was substantial regional variation in the net gains in expenditures per pupil as measured by Average Daily Attendance (ADA), with the New England and Mid-Atlantic states showing the largest increases, and the smallest growth in the Southwestern and the Rocky Mountain region between 1983 and 1990 (see Table 6).

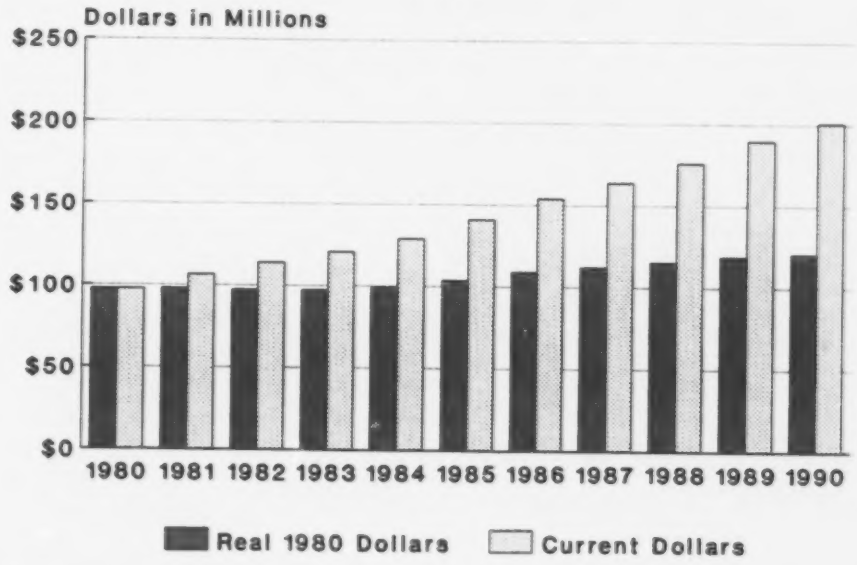
The fiscal gains for schooling occurred at the same time as the declining trend in total enrollments began to reverse in the mid-1980s. New pupils entered elementary schools in sizable numbers, with increases of about 1,909,490, for a gain of 8.9 percent. However, enrollments at the secondary level continued to drop (total decline, 15.4 percent), and this translated into a net decrease in total enrollments of 1.2 percent (see Table 7). The Far West and Southwestern regions experienced the largest enrollment increases between 1983 and 1990, while the New England, Mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes

[7]Year references in this chapter indicate fiscal year, or school-year ending dates. That is, 1990 represents the 1989-1990 school year. Note also that all figures for 1990 used here represent unrevised estimates from the National Education Association.

regions continued to experience overall declines.[8] The New England region experienced even more dramatic declines in daily attendance.[9]

Although national enrollment changes did not negatively affect aggregate revenue expansions, in some states and regions the enrollment factor did contribute to slower increases in revenues over the decade. The large gap in per-pupil spending increases between the Northeastern and Western regions seen in Table 6 may be attributable in part to demographics, with faster population growth in the west. New England experienced a huge economic boom without a commensurate increase in pupils. Two states in the CPRE sample reflect the effects of this pattern: Arizona and Pennsylvania. Real expenditures in Arizona rose 44.2 percent, but because of an (ADA) enrollment growth of 26.2 percent, real expenditures per pupil grew a fairly modest 14.3 percent. Pennsylvania, on the other hand, realized increases in total expenditures of only 17 percent, but because enrollments declined, real expenditures per pupil increased by over 25 percent (see Table 8).

Figure 3
Total School Revenues 1980 - 1990



Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics, 1989-1990*, Washington, DC.

[8]Total enrollment (ADA) changes by region between 1983 and 1990 were as follows: New England -7.3 percent; Mid-Atlantic -5.6 percent; Southeast +3.7 percent; Great Lakes -5.9 percent; Plains +1.0 percent; Southwest +10.5 percent; Rocky Mountains +6.7 percent; and Far West +14.4 percent.

[9]While New England's total enrollment declined by 7.3 percent, average attendance dropped by 10 percent. In the other regions, attendance and raw enrollment changes were similar.

Table 4
U.S. School Revenues in Current and Real Dollars, 1980 to 1990

Year (School Year Ending)	Current Revenues (in 1000s)	Real Revenues* (in 1000s)	Annual Percent Change in Real Revenues	Real Revenues Per Pupil	Annual Percent Change in Real Revenues Per Pupil
1980	$97,634,788	$97,634,788		$2,337	
1981	106,552,320	97,830,058	0.2%	2,385	2.0%
1982	113,998,989	97,340,907	-0.5%	2,426	1.7%
1983	120,486,052	97,146,225	-0.2%	2,448	0.9%
1984	128,875,470	99,186,296	2.1%	2,517	2.8%
1985	141,012,960	103,649,680	4.5%	2,634	4.6%
1986	153,806,525	108,935,813	5.1%	2,751	4.5%
1987	163,815,411	111,986,016	2.8%	2,813	2.2%
1988	175,983,275	115,345,596	3.0%	2,879	2.3%
1989	189,625,370	118,690,619	2.9%	2,948	2.4%
1990	200,734,076	120,470,978	1.5%	2,974	0.9%
Net Change 1980 - 1990	+103,099,288	+22,836,190	23.4%	+637	27.2%

*Based on the implicit price deflator, state and local government purchases for 1980.
Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics 1989-1990*, Washington, DC, 1990.

Table 5
U.S. School Expenditures in Current and Real Dollars, 1980 to 1990

Year (School Year Ending)	Current Total Expenditures/[1] (in 1000s)	Real Expenditures* (in 1000s)	Annual Percent Change in Real Expenditures	Real Expenditures Per Pupil	Annual Percent Change in Real Expenditures Per Pupil
1980	$96,105,379	$96,105,379		$2,300	
1981	105,102,889	96,513,213	0.4%	2,353	2.3%
1982	113,004,939	96,502,937	0.0%	2,405	2.2%
1983	119,158,987	96,095,957	-0.4%	2,422	0.7%
1984	127,014,287	97,778,512	1.8%	2,481	2.5%
1985	139,381,648	102,486,506	4.8%	2,604	4.9%
1986	152,187,095	107,781,229	5.2%	2,722	4.5%
1987	163,038,248	111,441,044	3.4%	2,800	2.8%
1988	175,539,423	115,032,387	3.2%	2,871	2.6%
1989	189,815,591	118,783,223	3.3%	2,950	2.7%
1990	203,824,957	122,343,912	3.0%	3,020	2.4%
Net Change	$107,719,578	$26,238,533	27.3%	+720	31.3%

[1]/Includes current expenses, capital outlay, and interest on school debt.
*Based on the implicit price deflator, state and local government purchases for 1980.
Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics 1989-1990*, Washington, DC, 1990.

Table 6
Increases in Regional Expenditures Per Pupil, 1983 to 1990
(in real* 1980 dollars)

Region	Net Change in Per Pupil (ADA) Expenditures
New England	$1,483
Mid-Atlantic	1,094
Southeast	545
Far West (includes Alaska and Hawaii)	480
Great Lakes	465
Plains	340
Southwest	242
Rocky Mountains	188

*Implicit price deflator, state and local government purchases for 1980. Note this is a national estimate.
Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics*, selected years. Washington, DC.

Table 7
U.S. Pupil Enrollments, 1980 to 1990

Year (School Year Ending)	Total Fall Enrollments	Annual Percent Change Total	Elementary Enrollments	Annual Percent Change Elementary	Secondary Enrollments	Annual Percent Change Secondary
1980	44,777,947		24,396,509		17,381,438	
1981	41,020,702		24,140,187	-1.1%	16,880,515	-2.9%
1982	40,118,988	-2.2%	24,081,641	-0.2%	16,037,347	-5.0%
1983	39,683,623	-1.1%	23,887,156	-0.8%	15,796,467	-1.5%
1984	39,404,874	-0.7%	23,726,904	-0.7%	15,677,970	-0.8%
1985	39,354,335	-0.1%	23,830,428	0.4%	15,523,907	-1.0%
1986	39,592,561	0.6%	24,238,117	1.7%	15,354,444	-1.1%
1987	39,806,636	0.5%	24,606,265	1.5%	15,200,371	-1.0%
1988	40,061,105	0.6%	25,313,545	2.9%	14,747,560	-3.0%
1989	40,262,404	0.5%	25,789,127	1.9%	14,473,277	-1.9%
1990	40,512,243	0.6%	26,305,999	2.0%	14,206,244	-1.8%
Net Change 1980 - 1990	-1,265,704	-1.2%	+1,909,490	8.9%	-3,175,194	-15.4%

Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics 1989-1990*, Washington, DC, 1990.

Table 8
CPRE Core State Fiscal Profiles, 1983 to 1990
in real 1980 dollars*

State/ Year	Expenditures (in 1000s)	Average Daily Attendance	Expenditures Per Pupil (ADA)	Average Teacher Salary
ARIZONA				
1990 (a)	$1,346,273	581,000	$2,316	$17,767
1983	933,306	460,741	2,026	16,098
% Change	44.2%	26.2%	14.3%	10.4%
CALIFORNIA				
1990	$13,078,532	4,716,545	$2,773	$23,407
1983	8,911,290	4,040,723	2,206	19,383
% Change	46.8%	16.7%	25.7%	20.8%
FLORIDA				
1990	$4,974,733	1,640,977	$3,032	$17,122
1983	3,226,401	1,368,520	2,357	14,738
% Change	54.2%	19.9%	28.6%	16.2%
GEORGIA				
1990	$2,816,290	1,052,997 (b)	$2,675	$16,742
1983	1,744,107	1,008,000	1,731	14,042
% Change	61.5%	4.5%	54.5%	19.2%
MINNESOTA				
1990	$2,049,430	691,800	$2,962	$19,322
1983	1,700,645	672,530	2,529	17,981
% Change	20.5%	2.9%	17.1%	7.5%
PENNSYLVANIA				
1990	$5,179,611	1,506,400	$3,438	$19,693
1983	4,427,823	1,621,800	2,730	17,079
% Change	17.0%	-7.1%	25.9%	15.3%

*Implicit price deflator, state and local government purchases for 1980. Note that this is a national estimate which does not account for regional variations.
(a) All 1990 figures are estimates; 1983 figures are revised estimates.
(b) A number projected by NEA, not actually supplied by the state.
Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics*, selected years, Washington, DC.

Teacher Salary Levels

Nationally, average salaries for teachers began to increase in 1982 after marked declines. In 1972, the average teacher salary in the U.S. peaked at $30,660, holding constant for inflation, then fell steadily over the next 10 years to bottom out at $26,625. By 1990 the average salary was up to $32,249, a substantial gain from 1980 but only a 5.2 percent increase in constant dollars since the 1972 peak. Beginning teacher salaries only made real gains of $408 since 1972 as well (National Center for Education Statistics, 1990). From the beginning to the end of the 1980s, average teacher salaries grew $2,837, or 17 percent (see Table 9).

Table 9
U.S. Average Teacher Salaries 1980 to 1990

Year (School Year Ending)	Current Average Teacher Salary	Constant* Average Teacher Salary	Annual Percent Change in Constant Average Teacher Salary
1980	$16,715	$16,715	
1981	18,404	16,900	1.1%
1982	20,327	17,359	2.7%
1983	21,641	17,452	0.5%
1984	23,005	17,710	1.5%
1985	24,666	18,137	2.4%
1986	26,361	18,669	2.9%
1987	27,707	18,938	1.4%
1988	29,231	19,155	1.1%
1989	31,003	19,401	1.3%
1990	32,574	19,552	0.8%
Net Change 1980 - 1990	+15,859	+2,837	17.0%

*Implicit price deflator, state and local government purchases for 1980.
Source: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics*, selected years, Washington, DC.

Over the decade there was an increasing tendency for teachers to mobilize salary demands at the state level, especially in the form of state minimum salary standards

(Bradley, 1990a). During this period, teacher discontent over salaries persisted, and demands for an increased share of revenues were raised at both state and local levels. Three out of four California school districts interviewed in this study experienced potential or actual strikes. As a consequence, teacher pay was raised substantially: one urban district raised teacher salaries by 24 percent over three years. Local districts sometimes used all their revenue sources to increase teachers' salaries. For example, Georgia's major state reform legislation attempted to relieve local districts of the burden of using their own resources to pay salary supplements to teachers who were in market categories of demand. However, local districts simply increased teacher salaries and are now spending more than before. In some states like Washington, concerns about teacher salaries overwhelmed more recent reform proposals (Viadero, 1990).

Renewed School Finance Equalization Efforts

Another issue that regained momentum after a period of quiet was the effort to equalize school finance. Some states enacted finance reforms on their own, without court intervention. However, after very little litigation through the majority of this period, by the end of the decade court cases were filed, pending or anticipated in 33 states (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1990).

The recent spate of activity is in part attributable to the fact that despite the earlier school finance reform efforts, 44.3 percent of education revenues were still provided at the local level in 1990. The variation in local wealth contributed to continuing inequities across districts, and provided a major impetus for extensive reforms in states like Kentucky, New Jersey, Montana and Texas, as well as West Virginia and Nebraska. In Pennsylvania, the increased reliance on local property taxes also stimulated legal activity.

There has been a perceptible change in courts' approaches to funding inequities. First, the grounds upon which school finance schemes are deemed inequitable have shifted. For instance, in 1989 the supreme courts in Texas, Montana and Kentucky ruled that their respective states violated the fundamental constitutional guarantees to education. In so doing these courts bypassed the more conventional standards upon which systems of school finance have been overturned. These conventional standards, such as strict scrutiny and minimal standards tests, review the finances scheme relative to compelling state interests or purposes (Franklin & Hickrod, 1990).

The courts were also more restrictive in the magnitudes of fiscal disparities permitted in both the Kentucky and Texas cases, where districts were already spending close to the state average, but where there were larger disparities between the lowest and highest spending ones. There was also some indication that the courts were leaning towards a standard of equal expenditures per pupil, rather than just equal access to a local property tax base (Odden, 1990). The California legislature applied the equal expenditures-per-pupil standard in 1989, a change which led to substantial gains for the suburban districts in the state. The New Jersey State Supreme Court decision in *Abbott v. Burke* mandated

that per-pupil expenditures in the 30 named "Special Needs" districts must equal the average of per-pupil expenditures in the 100 wealthiest districts in the state.

Outlook: Current Fiscal Downturns

By the end of the decade, a severe national recession crippled many state economies. States had come to rely more and more on income and sales taxes during this period, mechanisms which are very sensitive to fluctuations in the economy (Augenblick et al., 1990). The 1990 recession slowed income growth, causing the states to experience revenue shortfalls. By summer 1991 states all over the country were facing budget deficits, some of giant proportions. Even property taxes, usually a stable source of income, were affected by the slowing real estate market, falling real estate values, and high rates of mortgage defaults.

In response to the fiscal downturns, lawmakers pursued two courses. One was to curtail or postpone expenditures: by November 1990, 20 states and the District of Columbia moved to cut enacted budgets. A few states considered cutting state teacher pension funds. In Arizona, the fiscal situation became so severe that the state put off payments until the next fiscal year. Without this preventative action, the state would have been left with a 9 percent deficit (NCSL, 1990). While Florida invested substantially in education reform in the early part of the decade, serious financial difficulties hit the State by 1988. In 1991 they pared $159.5 million from the education budget, with deep cuts in basic aid as well as some reform initiatives like dropout prevention programs and improvements in kindergarten through third grade. The state held back and reduced monthly payments to local districts twice because of budget shortfalls.

States also attempted to address the fiscal crisis by trying to rebuild state coffers. In 1990, the states passed the largest single-year tax increases ever. A number of these new measures funded education reform. Specifically this was the case in Nebraska, New Mexico, Kentucky, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Texas, although this was counter to a general trend over the decade not to earmark new monies specifically for schools (Augenblick et al., 1990). States also passed lotteries and other means of raising or maintaining revenues specifically for schools. For example, California passed Proposition 98, which was intended to guarantee a floor for school expenditures of at least 41 percent of the state's general funds[10].

However, state dollars for education also came into stiffer competition with funds for prisons and Medicaid. State spending per $100 of personal income declined $0.07 for elementary and secondary education between 1980 and 1989 (from $2.37 to $2.30), while rising $0.16 for Medicaid and $0.15 for corrections (Augenblick et al., 1990).

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[10]Rather than being a boon to education, however, Proposition 98 created some serious political difficulties, becoming a source of much contention between the governor, other government sectors, and the education lobbies. Some fear that it actually provided a ceiling rather than a floor for school expenditures. Between 1988 and 1990, it only contributed an additional 1.8 percent to education (after growth and inflation), according to *Conditions of Education in California 1989.*

A sizable number of voter initiatives in 1990 tried to overturn the tax hikes and limit government expenditures. In Nebraska, for example, a proposed constitutional amendment would have repealed recent school-finance reform and associated tax increases passed by the legislature; another measure would have prevented governmental agencies from increasing budgets by more than 2 percent annually without voter approval. In New Jersey, 500,000 citizens signed petitions to repeal the $1.1 billion tax increase in which the majority of the funds had been targeted for education. New Jersey's popular U.S. Senator, Bill Bradley, was nearly defeated in a protest vote because he refused to take a stand against the new taxes. The November elections also held tax cutting or limiting measures in eight other states, including California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington. Despite the fact that these measures were defeated in several states,[11] the gubernatorial campaigns were clearly affected by anti-tax rhetoric. Taxing and spending concerns are widely thought to have defeated the incumbent in Michigan, and to have been important factors in the outcomes of the Nebraska, Kansas, and California races (Harp, 1990). A strong pro-education governor in Minnesota, also went down to defeat in November partly because of this issue. Other governors who had raised taxes chose not to run again.

Whatever the long-term effect of these fiscal problems, they are having at least some short-term impact on education reform efforts. In Arizona, voters defeated a proposition that would have increased per-pupil expenditures by $100 annually over the next 10 years. In Mississippi, legislators voted not to fund an education reform plan, and the state was preparing for $30 billion in budget cuts (Walker, 1990). Furthermore, the size and scale of new reform efforts is generally less fiscally ambitious, and in some cases new efforts are going hand-in-hand with cuts in other parts of the education budget.

Yet despite these fiscal downturns, school reform still remains high on many state policy agendas. This is a marked contrast to reform efforts during the recession at the beginning of the eighties, when education was a less politically salient issue for legislators. Overall, the 1980 decade brought growth in revenues and expenditures, pupil enrollments, a renewed interest in school reform, and some modest but positive changes in teacher salaries.

During the early 1980s recession and immediately afterwards, most people predicted that the money would never be forthcoming to respond to calls for reform, but in fact it was. The full effect of current economic problems remains to be seen, but over the long-term the pattern in school funding is likely to show the continued gains we have seen throughout the post World War II period. Therefore, it seems wise to act on the assumption that there will be fiscal growth over the next decade rather than heed only the gloomier short-term economic forecasts, and to make broader long-term plans for spending these resources to accomplish critical national goals (Odden, in press).

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[11]These include California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

Chapter 5
Conclusion and Challenge for Future Reform

The bulk of the educational reform activity in the 1980s took place in the middle part of the decade. This was certainly true for the six states in the CPRE study, and seems to hold true more generally. Recent large-scale reforms in such states as Kentucky and Texas still do not match the volume of activity for the 1983-87 period. For many states, the latter part of the decade was characterized by slower progress that stressed adjustment and consolidation with a mix of modest reduction and expansion of the basic effort, depending on the local situation.

The question now is whether momentum for reform can be renewed in the 1990s. While public attention is still directed towards education, there are two important problems. The first is financial. The current economic downturn, with its combination of financial constraints and taxpayer resistance, is likely to limit the reforms that can be attempted. This should be a short-run problem however. A review of education history since World War II shows constantly increasing education expenditures even after inflation has been taken into account. Thus, as discouraging as the current situation is, it would be well to plan for the opportunities that are likely to appear in the future.

The second is technical. As experience with reform deepens, the complexities of improving education become more apparent. The easy reforms like increasing high school graduation requirements have been accomplished. Now it remains to deal with the more difficult issues. To address these issues, it will be necessary for policymakers, politicians, and the public to reach consensus about what must be accomplished and hold on for the long haul.

To summarize what has been accomplished, we return to the five issues raised in the introduction. The issues are the attention given to encouraging higher-order thinking, the serving at-risk youth, changes in state and local governance, state response to local variation, and the coherence of reform efforts.

Higher-Order Thinking

The reports that initiated the 1980s reform activity dramatized the need to raise the intellectual level of what was taught in American schools, but the most popular early reforms did not address that issue. Clune (with White & Patterson, 1989) and others note that the majority of new courses added to the curriculum to respond to increased high school graduation requirements were at basic or general levels and did not increase the exposure of low- and middle-achieving students to more challenging content. In one state we visited, some respondents acknowledged that courses were often only re-labelled to

meet the letter of the law. Other coping strategies allowed districts to comply with new requirements without substantially changing the content of instruction.

Over time some states and districts initiated steps to teach higher-order thinking more aggressively than others. California was an early leader in this area, with Minnesota and Arizona taking notable steps more recently. Georgia had begun to introduce the concept into its thinking about curriculum and testing. About a third of the districts visited were also strengthening the intellectual content they provided. The two most predominant motivations for such steps appeared to be either state action or the presence of a significant upper middle-class clientele who wanted such service.

The mechanisms for introducing higher-order thinking included a mix of testing and curriculum development. Arizona, California, and Minnesota all introduced tests or assessment programs designed to measure higher-order thinking during the decade. They also attended to the curriculum/testing alignment issue in some way. In retrospect, some tightening of standards, like no pass-no play rules and mandating a certain grade-point average to graduate, may have worked against higher-order thinking because they appeared to put pressure on educators to ensure that students "got through" school successfully. Such tightening up increased the risks for teachers who wanted to introduce more complex content, and encouraged students to comply rather than engage in the questioning, exploratory behavior necessary for critical thinking.

The growing interest in higher-order thinking is clearly a positive development that can be weakened by a long-term focus on basic skills (Cole, 1990). Policies of the decade that should be expanded upon include efforts to develop alternative forms of assessment that appraise higher-order skills, and initiatives that integrate higher-order thinking skills into instructional strategies, curricula and assessment *where integration is guided by an interest in critical thinking and synthesis of learning*. Some of the new research on teachers' reflective thinking that is leading to new forms of teacher assessment (Peterson & Comeaux, 1989) may provide a way to link teacher policy to other developments.

At-Risk Youth

The district interviews suggest that the problem of serving low-achieving students and those who are at-risk of failing is growing. Serving these students is *the* issue for urban school districts; it is an important issue, indeed one of growing consequence, for districts that, in the past, have not had significant numbers of students experiencing problems. It is not clear exactly how to deal with this problem. Urban districts with large populations of at-risk youth are often overwhelmed and many of these districts find that their strategies to hold students in school conflict with strategies to encourage higher-order thinking.

Sensitivity to at-risk youth was one of two issues that contributed to a significant reassessment of state testing policies. The other, in states like Arizona and California, was an interest in higher-order thinking. However, in states like Florida and Georgia that

stressed testing as an accountability device and a control over who would be promoted or allowed to graduate, the recent reduction in testing reflected a worry that such controls increased the dropout rate without contributing to the education of those students most at-risk.

Moreover, the problems of higher-order thinking and at-risk youth overlap. Introducing more cognitively challenging content may be difficult for all students. This seeming tension placed many educators on the horns of a dilemma. Yet, programs like Essential Schools indicate that placing students at the center of the learning process while personalizing their instructional programs to take account of their individual situations, integrating both social and academic strategies (Muncie, D. Personal conversation on July 11, 1991), may be the most advantageous approach to educating at-risk students.

In order to fulfill the demands of providing equal educational opportunity and meeting the need for an increasingly well-educated, flexible, and highly-trained workforce this challenge must be faced, and special steps may be necessary. These could include the expansion of early childhood programs, a longer school day for schools with large concentrations of lower-income students, and special work with parents to help them increase their own skills and work with their children (Smith & O'Day, 1991b). All four options, including the Essential Schools approach, are being considered at some level in a number of states and local districts, but the expansion of early childhood programs has received the widest attention and policy activity. Moving further in this direction is likely to expand the role of the public schools and require greater coordination with other human service agencies as well as additional funds.

Governance

Another important development in the 1980s was a change in the governance structure of education. On the one hand, states and districts increasingly took control over central educational functions through student testing programs, increasing graduation requirements, and developing curriculum guidelines and frameworks. On the other, there were conscious efforts to push authority over some issues as far down the system as possible through site-based management and restructuring initiatives. What those programs did for teachers, choice programs in particular did for parents. At the state level, decentralization was less pervasive than centralization. Most site-based management and restructuring programs were locally initiated (David, 1989; Cohen & Spillane, in press; Clune & White, 1988). There were still very few choice programs, and they were often highly constrained.

It remains to be seen what the significance of recent proposals to reduce the size of state departments of education will be. Such proposals are often justified as ways to change state agencies from regulatory to service agencies, in addition to saving money. However, experience with state departments that were downsized in the 1970s and 1980s suggests that the effect may be to reduce assistance activities while leaving regulation intact.

What are the consequences of these divergent trends? Although states may centralize in some areas and decentralize in others, specific districts may not experience both trends. Yet, for some districts these trends coincide. Fuhrman and Elmore (1990) found that education governance is so complex that even major state assumption of policy initiative still leaves significant discretionary jurisdiction to districts. The theory of how centralization and decentralization should interact was expressed by Tennessee's former Governor Lamar Alexander (now Secretary of Education) as a "horse-trade" in which states would hold districts accountable for the outcomes of education in return for giving them more control over the process (National Governor's Association, 1986). In some states and districts this outcomes-driven model of governance appeared to be working. Minnesota's Outcome Based Education may prove to be an instructive example exactly because the state establishes the criteria for student success while giving districts much more control over time allocation and course offerings. On the other hand, district efforts to reward more effective schools by reduced monitoring and oversight have foundered on the need to comply with state regulations.

It is too early to offer recommendations for the reform of internal decision-making. The idea of centralizing control over outcomes and decentralizing most other decisions has considerable intuitive logic and is particularly attractive in this society at a time when a growing cry for accountability coexists with deep suspicion of big government and respect for local control. However, we need to know more about how, and how often, these centralizing and decentralizing trends interact, what outcomes should be and how they can be measured, and what the consequences are of giving local districts certain kinds of discretion. Previous experience informs us that complete decentralization gave us the uncoordinated, underachieving districts that prompted the national emergency and eventual outcry that gave rise to the reform decade in the first place.

Local Variation

While the education establishment predicted local resistance to the reforms of the 1980s based on their experiences with earlier attempts to change local practice, in actuality most districts complied at least passively and many exhibited active and even enthusiastic acceptance of new state requirements. Nevertheless, there was variation among local districts in the type and scope of compliance to state-level policies and demands.

Local response to state initiatives depends in large part on local agendas. They are often quite different from those of state-level reformers. Districts have their own problems including such issues as growth and decline, strikes, and leadership changes. Moreover, some problems that are significant to reformers, most notably those stemming from at-risk youth, are far from evenly distributed among the nation's school districts. Local concerns affect the energy and capacity that districts can give to reform proposals.

District responses to state reforms vary on two dimensions: the extent of adoption of the state policies and the presence of an independent agenda. The most positive outcomes of state reforms come in districts where those reforms support the local agenda. Such districts can bring a level of energy, sophistication, and imagination to policies that the policymakers themselves would not expect; this happy confluence of interests is most likely to happen in the higher capacity districts that do well on their own.

State policy is also quite constructive in districts that lack an independent improvement thrust but adopt that of the state. In such situations, the state provides an invaluable contribution to these (usually) low capacity districts. If the outcomes seem less significant than in districts where state and local interests coincide, they may be more important, for in these districts state policy is truly a catalyst for whatever change will happen.

State policy can play a similar role in districts that lack an independent improvement program and only comply minimally with the state's. Although the absolute magnitude of change is quite low in these instances, greater advances take place than if the state had not intervened. Often, however, these districts perform poorly and additional steps are called for to accelerate the rate of improvement. What those steps are, however, remains unclear.

It is particularly troubling that some districts complied minimally with the state reforms while continuing to carry out their own plans. This concern stems from the tact that the districts' level of minimal compliance was determined by a high level of local problems; often state policies were designed to address the academic problems of those specific types of districts. In this study, the bulk of these minimal-compliance districts were urban systems with large concentrations of low-achieving students. In addition, districts' educational problems are often complicated by staff conflicts, lack of enthusiasm, and more complex communication and organizational problems. Lack of district attention to a state policy often reflected the policy's irrelevance to the special situations these districts faced. Policies developed for the average or above-average achiever or for smaller systems do not fit in these locations. Several of these districts were aggressively pursuing their own approaches to improvement and using state initiatives where possible, but they often were forced to turn to other sources of assistance.

The challenge of local variation is two-fold: encouraging and taking advantage of local initiative while ensuring that state standards are met, and developing policies that reflect the great differences among districts, especially in the educational needs their students face. Experiments conducted with waivers, takeovers, and other strategies for differential treatment of school districts may be especially useful in this regard (see Fuhrman with Fry, 1989). As well, it is important to consider the expressed concerns of local districts in state-level policy decision-making.

Coherence

Districts often respond first to their own concerns not only because of local agendas, but also because the state has difficulty in sending them consistent messages. This lack of coherence is the product of a fragmented system where state legislatures, boards and departments of education, universities, professional associations, business groups, and district and school staff all advocate different reforms. In the best circumstances these reforms complement each other, as has often happened when state and district personnel agreed to strengthen graduation requirements. In the worst cases the reforms were in conflict. Usually, the result was ambiguity and uncertainty. For instance, some California administrators were unsure whether the state's new science frameworks would be counted by the state universities as college-track courses. Changes in state administrations compounded the confusion, since the changes could redirect reform thrusts substantially. Pennsylvania and Arizona experienced this particularly, with extensive changes in high-level policy actors.

Throughout the decade, several states took steps to increase the coherence of their policies by beginning to coordinate testing and curriculum requirements. It is premature to tell what the outcome of such developments will be. What *is* clear is that it is difficult to coordinate testing and curriculum in ways that are meaningful to teachers and that contribute to student learning. A number of concrete problems, such as how one should deal with multiple tests for the same children, have arisen, and are likely to be solved in the coming years. Still, the level of integration achieved, even in the states that have given this problem the greatest attention, does not match conditions found in other countries with greater governmental integration and a longer tradition of coordinating tests and curriculum (Cohen & Spillane, in press).

Yet the linkages that have been achieved between testing and curriculum are a quantum leap ahead of developments in teaching policy. Policymakers have hardly begun to consider how to develop approaches to recruitment, retention, and training that are closely linked to curricular objectives. Such integration may be a great deal to expect in an area where policies often contradict each other. We are not the first to note that steps intended to maintain an adequate number of teachers often conflict with those attempting to enhance teacher quality (see, for example, Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988).

There is also the problem of ancillary policies. At the same time that they initiate major curricular, testing, and personnel reforms, states provide incentives for the initiation of satellite drug and AIDS education programs, as well as *ad hoc* fixes like no pass-no play rules. These are rarely integrated into central reforms, and often distract attention from more fundamental changes.

It is also clear that the magnitude of the reform program is not the same as coherence. Programs with more parts are better at capturing local educators' attention. They may lead to more change, but these omnibus reform bills often achieve compromise through addition rather than integration, having numerous parts with no clear relationship

to each other. In these cases, overload is likely to result. Moreover, as in the situation when multiple actors adopt unrelated policies, the burden of building coherence falls on the districts. Coherence achieved this way may not be in the service of the ends that are most important to policymakers.

Coherent reform packages are likely to have the greatest impact on local school districts. However, they may require a level of consensus about means and ends that is atypical in American policymaking. This lack of agreement reflects strong value differences about what should be accomplished, limited knowledge about how to accomplish it, and constraints in the policymaking process itself that work against extensive exploration of the issues and experimentation with alternative approaches. It is necessary to concentrate harder on doing less but doing it better, and on integrating efforts around a focused, but challenging mission, particularly in times of financial shortages.

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